Disability NOW
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Abuse ignored

Thousands of disabled children who have been abused are falling through cracks in the child protection system, campaigners have claimed.

A new National Working Group on Child Protection and Disability, which includes major charities, is to call on the government to urgently fund research into the issue.

This comes as the jailing of a special needs teacher has again revealed the vulnerability of children with disabilities.

A jury at Newcastle Crown Court heard how Malcolm Phillips, aged 51, of Mowbray Close, Sunderland, choked autistic children at a residential school and stood on their faces and hair.

He was found guilty of nine charges of child cruelty, although the jury cleared him of another 11 charges.

Phillips was sentenced to four months in prison on all nine charges, to run concurrently.

A police spokesman said Phillips had been guilty of "despicable acts of cruelty".

Disability and abuse consultant Margaret Kennedy, a member of the new working group, said the government's failure to carry out research into the issue was "disgraceful" and "a clear indication that these children do not matter to the government.

"They do not want to do anything because they know what they will find – thousands of disabled children being abused and nobody doing anything about it," she said.

Along with fellow consultant Jane Wonnacott, Ms Kennedy has just completed research which suggests that less than one per cent of disabled children are placed on child protection registers.

They believe the true numbers at risk of abuse are far higher and that signs of abuse are often misread as symptoms of the child's condition.

The working group includes the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Council for Disabled Children (CDC), the National Deaf Children's Society, the children's residential unit of the National Children's Bureau, Voice UK and Mencap.

It has already secured the support of a prominent Labour backbencher.

David Hinchliffe, chairman of the Commons health select committee, promised to pressure the government to act after Health Minister Jacqui Smith admitted there had been no government-funded studies in the last five years.

A Department of Health spokeswoman said there were no plans to carry out research.

But Dr Philippa Russell, director of the CDC, said: "We fear that the new cases of abuse are tips of icebergs."

Have your cake and eat it: Natalie Baker, 8, helps Health Minister Jacqui Smith ice a cake to launch England's first national learning disability helpline to be run by Mencap (*see number above*).

A day for voices

Disabled youngsters from Wales got the chance to speak out at the Welsh Assembly in an event held during the International Day of Disabled People on 3 December (*see front cover*).

One youngster, Affraidda, 17, said afterwards: "I'd like to see public transport access improve, and to get more help in finding a job."

Minister for Finance Local Government and Communities Edwina Hart promised to take up the issues with colleagues.

The day also saw Nigel Griffiths, Minister for Small Business, launch a Disabled Entrepreneurs' Network, to give advice over the internet about small businesses to disabled people. And the Disability Rights Commission launched an education campaign (*see page 6*).

www.disabled-entrepreneurs.net

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www.disabilitynow.org.uk

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FRONT COVER: KARINA, 18, AND ANDREW, 24, SPOKE AT THE WELSH ASSEMBLY ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PEOPLE. PHOTOGRAPHY BY HUW JOHN. SEE STORY ON PAGE ONE

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Charge change

Disabled people who work will have their earnings protected from care charges under new rules unveiled by the government.

Disability groups welcomed the move which means that earned income will be disregarded by councils arranging home care and also by the Independent Living Fund (ILF), which also pays for care.

The government claimed the average ILF recipient would be better off by £130 a week, though charities dispute this.

The changes were announced to combat the lottery in home care charging and to tackle the means-testing of income which created disincentives to work under both systems.

Frances Hasler, director of the National Centre for Independent Living, welcomed the ILF earnings disregard. She said: "It is extremely good news for personal assistance users who want jobs."

But under both systems, those not working could be left with higher charges than those in jobs, campaigners claimed. Someone on benefits could still pay £40 a week for their home care, said Mike Hurdiss, benefits policy officer at Scope.

He said: "This sits uncomfortably with the government's mantra of 'support for those who can work and security for those who cannot'".

The new rules will be phased in from April, though campaigners are waiting to see if ILF rules on contributions through benefits change as a result of a review due very soon.

Rules at a glance

Revised Independent Living Fund

- All earned income will be ignored
- Claimants may get help if savings do not exceed £18,500

If no further changes are made to the present ILF system

- Value of Income Support claimant's Severe Disability Premium will be deducted from the ILF grant
- Value of half a DLA claimant's highest rate care component will usually be deducted from the ILF grant

Homecare guidance to councils

- All earned income will be ignored
- No-one's income will be allowed to fall below the basic level of income support plus 25 per cent
- Charges for homecare can be taken from the DLA care component but only after an assessment of an individual's disability related costs

CHRIS GRIEVE/THE MIRROR

Close shave: Goalkeeper Carl Richardson in action for the England amputee football team, who claimed third position in the play-offs of the Amputee World Championships in Rio de Janeiro in November.

Fighting to keep warm

A key government argument against extending the £200 winter fuel payment from all pensioner households to severely disabled people of working age has been punctured by the Minister for Disabled People.

Maria Eagle acknowledged that Disability Living Allowance (DLA) only assists with the added costs of disability. She said: "No one would agree they meet all the added costs."

She was speaking at a meeting requested by Lord Ashley, chair of the All Party Parliamentary Disability Group (APDG) in November.

The government has argued that DLA covers the extra costs of disability, such as food, heating and laundry. But there has been no research into the adequacy of DLA and a *DN* survey of nearly 1,200 severely disabled people shows it is not meeting their heating needs.

At the meeting, *DN* readers Aileen Grist and Mike Knoth explained why they needed the payment, supported by Lord Ashley, Conservative peer Lord Swinfen, Roger Berry MP and *DN* editor Mary Wilkinson.

Lord Ashley said that government figures showed only 29 per cent of pensioner households were in fuel poverty – needing to spend more than ten per cent of their income to maintain satisfactory heating – while many severely disabled people are poor and feel the cold.

The Minister did not defend the Government's position, and promised to review the arguments to see if they were "robust".

Afterwards, Lord Ashley said: "It was a big step forward. From now on, we will accelerate the campaign."

Later, the APDG invited Aileen Grist and Mary Wilkinson to discuss the issue.

Roger Berry's Early Day Motion in the Commons calling for an extension of the allowance now has 156 signatures and he is seeking an adjournment debate.

To support the DN campaign, please urge your MP to sign EDM 289.

Showing them how its done

A new code of practice will show businesses what action they should take to improve access for disabled customers.

The guidelines, produced by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), apply to all UK service providers.

They include details of existing duties, and those to come into force in October 2004 under the Disability Discrimination Act that will require businesses to make "reasonable adjustments" to their premises.

The final version of the code will be published in February.

The British Standards Institution (BSI) has also released national guidelines to support the DRC's code of practice: BS 8300.

The draft code of practice is available on the DRC's website: www.drc-gb.org

BS 8300 costs £148 (£74 to BSI members) and is available from www.bsi-global.com or by calling 020 8996 9001

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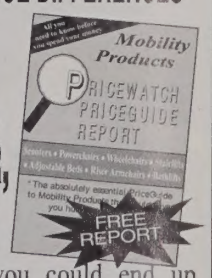

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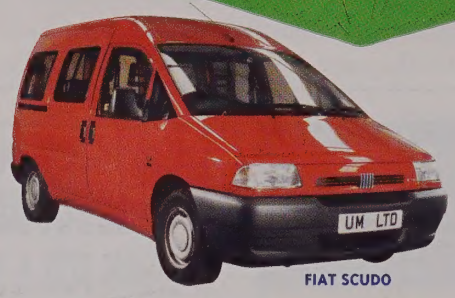

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Naughty or nice?

A leading consumers' group has called for urgent reform of a government medical advice body.

A "patient-centred inquiry" by the Consumers' Association (CA) found "serious deficiencies" in the way the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) carries out appraisals of drugs and treatments.

It called on the government to commission a "sweeping independent review" of the advisory body.

CA also recommended that NICE should make public how it measures the clinical or cost effectiveness of treatments, and make more of an effort to help patients contribute to appraisals.

A NICE spokeswoman said details of clinical and cost effectiveness would begin to appear on its website this month.

She said NICE recognised the importance of patients' perspectives, and that its operation would be reviewed by the Health Select Committee this month.

But a CA spokeswoman said the inquiry showed there was "still some way to go" in involving patients' organisations.

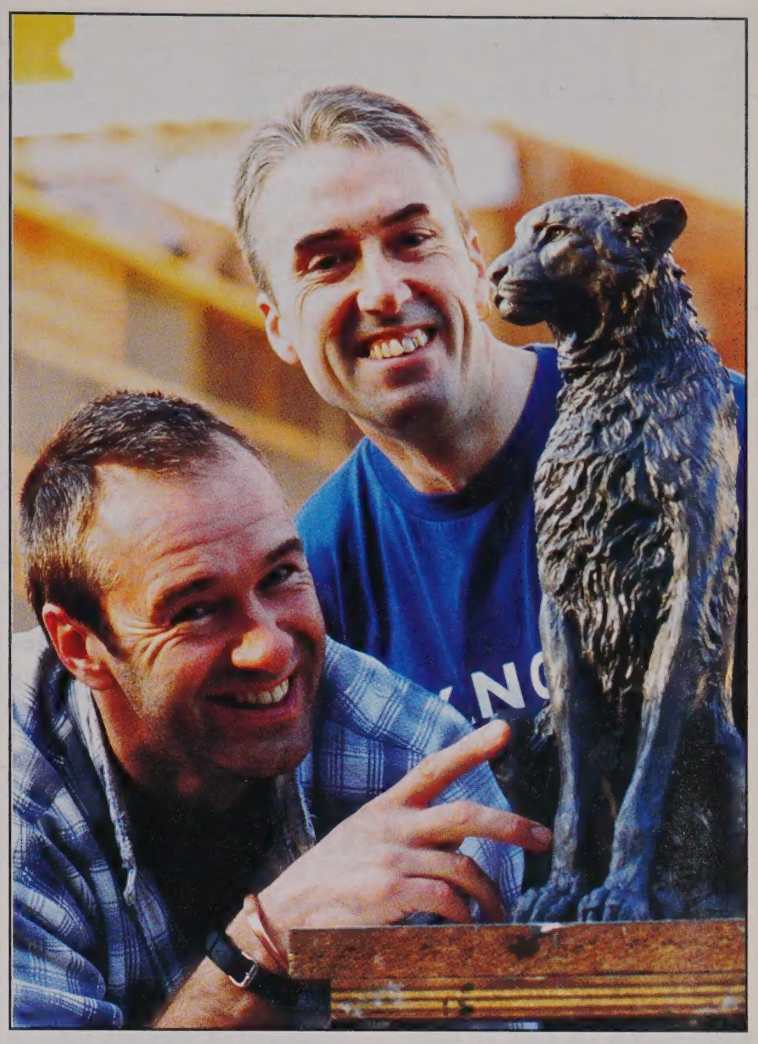
She added: "There is still a lack of clarity over what measures and thresholds NICE uses for assessing clinical and cost effectiveness."

Clara Mackay, principal policy adviser at CA, said: "Our public inquiry into how NICE works let many patient groups express their dissatisfaction with NICE's processes.

"There must be a sweeping, independent review of these processes and NICE's relationship with patient organisations – or confidence in this important body will continue to drop."

The government has announced that health authorities and primary care trusts will now have to fund all treatments and drugs approved by NICE.

From January 2002 they will have three months after a NICE decision to begin funding the drugs for all patients told by their doctors the treatment is appropriate.



Meow: Mick Winterburn (*right*), received a Making a Difference award from Remploy for making the sculpture studio of his brother Steve (*left*) more accessible to people with disabilities. They are pictured with a sculpture of a cheetah they are working on.

DRC backs crackdown

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is backing the Baywatch Campaign which calls for a crackdown on disabled parking space abuse.

MPs are also giving their support.

DRC chair Bert Massie said: "The DRC would support the stronger enforcement of parking for disabled drivers. It is quite clear that if bays are not protected then disabled people cannot shop."

In the Commons, Labour MP Laura Moffatt has tabled an early day motion praising the campaign organised by the British Polio Fellowship, Disabled Drivers' Association, Disabled Drivers' Motor Club (DDMC) and Disability Now, condemning the selfishness of abusers. It also welcomes the initiative taken by Baywatch and supermarkets, Asda, Safeway, Sainsbury's and Tesco to protect disabled parking spaces.

Meanwhile, local authorities and disability groups are cracking down on parking abuse. Darlington Association on Disability, Darlington's borough council and the police are running an awareness campaign. At the end of December they will start withdrawing badges and fine abusers up to £1,000.

A £1,000 maximum fine is being introduced for the second time in Liverpool's city centre. In a June clampdown, 25 badges were withdrawn and 12 cases are waiting to appear in court.

"This is just the kind of initiative we want to see", said DDMC chief executive Ed Passant. "We hope other local authorities will follow suit."

To support the campaign, urge your MP to sign EDM 519.

A startling variation

A government survey has revealed for the first time the huge variations in the number of disabled people employed in different local authority areas.

The 2001 Labour Force Survey shows 20.9 per cent of disabled people of working age in Hackney, London, do at least one hour of paid work a week.

But in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, that figure rises to 88.1 per cent.

Areas with high proportions of disabled people tend to have lower employment rates among these groups, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Bitter pills

A charity is calling for a review of the government policy of contracting out medical tests for benefits.

It follows claims by some disabled people that doctors have recorded results of medical tests that they have not carried out.

The doctors are employed by the firm Schlumberger SEMA to carry out medicals on Disability Living Allowance and Incapacity Benefit claimants.

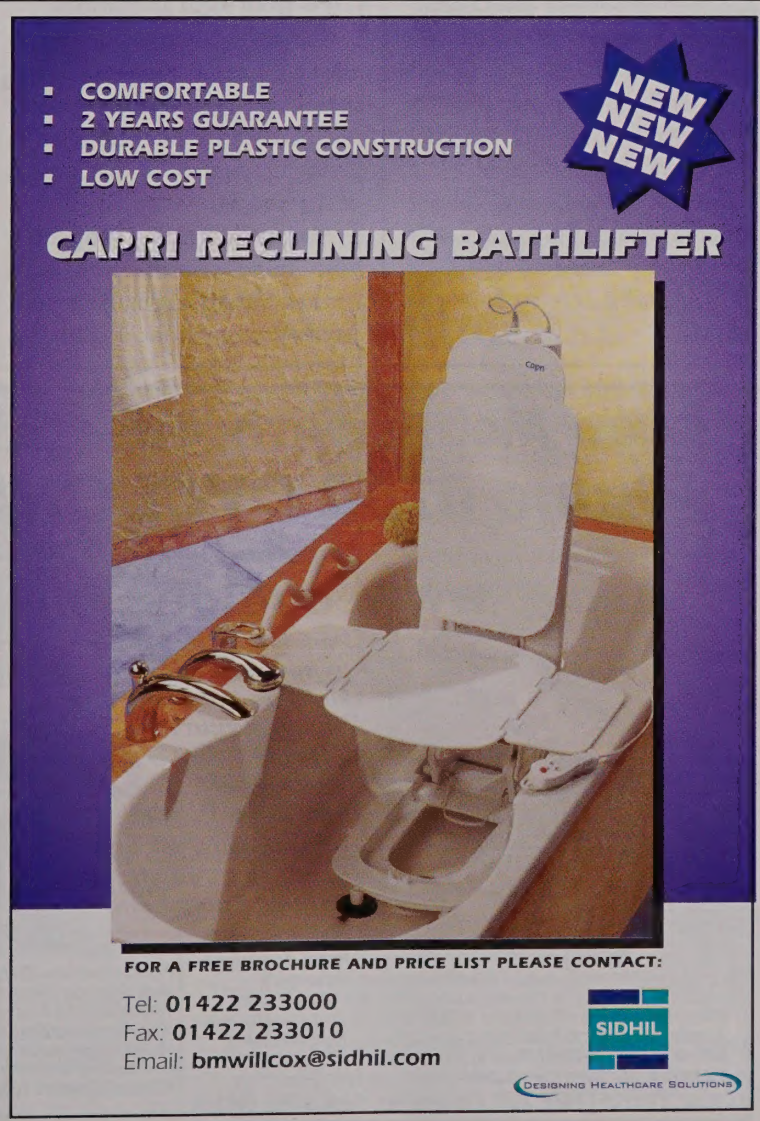
The information charity DIAL UK has highlighted these and other problems in a campaign A Bitter Pill.*

The company said it took action over a number of complaints about doctors this year but not specifically over doctors falsely recording information.

It also confirmed that it receives a number of complaints about some doctors.

Doctors falsifying information or the subject of multiple complaints could be stopped from carrying out assessments.

** Tel: 01302 310123*



Public needs education

More than two thirds of people would be unhappy to see a child with a learning disability or mental health problem alongside non-disabled pupils in a classroom, according to a new survey.

The NOP survey was released by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) as it launched a campaign to help disabled pupils and students enter mainstream education.

A DRC spokeswoman said: "It is fear and ignorance of the possible benefits of inclusive education."

From September, schools and colleges will have to make sure they do not provide less favourable treatment to disabled students, under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).

They will also have to make reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled students are not substantially disadvantaged.

The DRC's Educating for Equality campaign includes setting up a confidential helpline* for pupils, parents and schools, and an education conciliation service to help solve disputes.

The DRC will also put pressure on the government for greater inclusion of disability issues in the national curriculum and publish codes of practice for schools and colleges.

Dr Philippa Russell, a DRC commissioner, said: "This act gives disabled students the right to be full, young citizens in the life of their school."

In January, the government will implement parts of the act which refer to children with special educational needs (SEN), strengthening their rights to mainsteam education.

Among other measures, education authorities must provide advice to parents of children with SEN and a way to resolve disputes.

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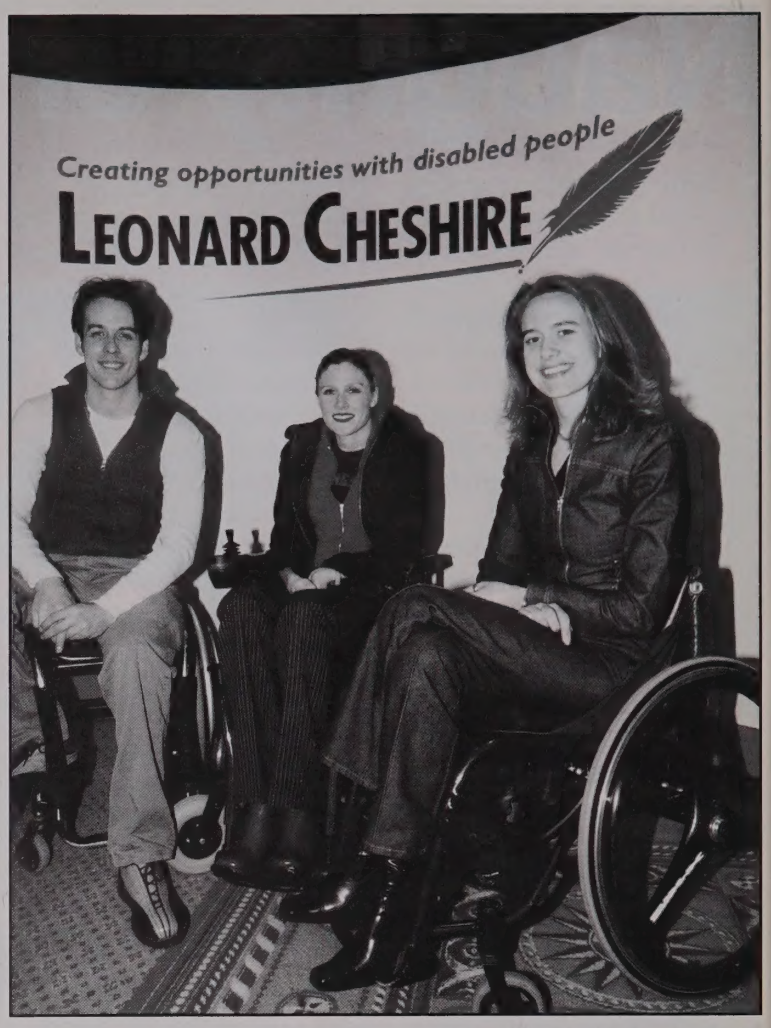

Strike a pose: Colin Brumage (*left*) and Emma Knight (*right*) were the winners of the Leonard Cheshire VisABLE 2001 disabled modelling competition. TV presenter Lara Masters (*centre*) was a judge.

Closure sparks anger

A medical expert has backed claims that disabled people could end up in nursing homes because of a London council's plans to pull the plug on funding a home care charity.

Lambeth SHAD provides 24 hour care for six people, but Lambeth Council has refused to meet the charity's request for additional funding for providing services. The charity is due to close in late January.

The council insists that residential care is not being put forward as an alternative and clients are now being reassessed for appropriate care.

But Dr Robin Luff, consultant in rehabilitation medicine at Kings College Hospital, feared that two SHAD clients could end up in nursing homes. He said: "If the alternative arrangements fail... that might be the only crisis that is necessary to completely destroy the chances of staying in the community.

The council claimed that the organisation brought cash problems on itself by providing care for clients which had not been agreed.

But SHAD director Isabelle Clement said that was because SHAD responded to users' needs quickly.

One client Simon Shaw, who is paralysed from the neck down, is unlikely to end up in residential care, but said: "SHAD is offering everything that I need. To change it would be devastating."

In brief

New packaging

The Co-op has become the first shop to label alcoholic drinks with Braille.

This Christmas, it will be introducing the labels on to its own brand Co-op Premium 5-Year Old Whisky and Co-op Premium Triple Distilled Vodka.

The chain also plans to put the labels on beers, wines and other spirits sold under its own brand.

Charity set to expand

The new head of an independent living charity says she wants it to be given the chance to "modernise and expand".

Nicole Penn-Symons, who has been appointed chief executive of The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF), was previously director of lottery projects at the Arts Council of England and is a qualified solicitor.

The DLF, the leading charity for equipment information, was previously headed by Nick Pelling, who left to join the Church.

Eagle attacks

Minister for Disabled People Maria Eagle has attacked local authorities for dragging their feet over a scheme that allows people with disabilities to pay for their own care.

She told a London conference that only 5,000 disabled people receive Direct Payments (DPs) from local authorities.

She said: "One of the things about Direct Payments is that social services departments do not necessarily like the idea of giving up control of that aspect of the budget.

"It is now a right that people who have community care grants have a right to direct payments – it's not a question of social workers deciding whether you are going to get them or not."

She said councils should make sure their staff are properly trained.

The conference was organised by Breaking Barriers, which campaigns for equal rights for ethnic minority disabled people.

It wants to publish a guide and set up a national network for disabled people from ethnic minorities who find it difficult to access DPs.

To join the network, contact Breaking Barriers, 250 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5RD.

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- lowest	14.65	14.90
Mobility Component		
- higher	38.65	39.30
- lower	14.65	14.90
DISABLED PERSON'S TAX CREDIT		
Single person basic credit	61.05	62.10
Lone parent/couple basic credit	91.25	92.80
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Child credits		
- Under 16[1]	26.00	26.45
- 16-18	26.75	27.20
Disabled child credit[2]	30.00	35.50
Enhanced disability tax credit		
- single person	11.05	11.25
- lone parent/couple	16.00	16.25
Income threshold		
- single person	72.25	73.50
- lone parent/couple	92.90	94.50

1 The 16-18 rate applies to awards starting from the September following the 16th birthday.
2 Payable in addition to the child credit.

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- lower rate	4.65	4.75
INVALID CARE ALLOWANCE	41.75	42.45
INCAPACITY BENEFIT		
Long-term Incapacity Benefit	69.75	70.95
Short-term Incapacity Benefit (under pension age)		
- lower rate	52.60	53.50
- higher rate	62.20	63.25
Short-term Incapacity Benefit (over pension age)		
- lower rate	66.90	68.05
- higher rate	69.75	70.95
RETIREMENT PENSION (A or B)	72.50	75.50
STATUTORY SICK PAY		
Earnings threshold	72.00	75.00
Standard rate	62.20	63.25
INDUSTRIAL INJURIES DISABLEMENT PENSION		
18 and over, or under 18 with dependants		
- 100%	112.90	114.80
- 20%	22.58	22.96
Under 18		
- 100%	69.15	70.35
- 20%	13.83	14.07
WIDOW'S PENSION	72.50	75.50

INCOME SUPPORT
From April 2002 onwards, residential care will no longer be funded through the income support preserved scheme.

WORKING FAMILIES' TAX CREDIT		
Basic credit	59.00	60.00
Income threshold	92.90	94.50
30-hour credit, Child credits, Enhanced disability tax credi		
- same as Disabled Persons' Tax Credit		

THANKS TO MIKE HURDISS OF SCOPE

Benefits changes welcomed

Disability campaigners have welcomed the government's announcement of above-inflation rises in benefits and tax credits for parents of disabled children.

Work and Pensions Secretary Alistair Darling said the disabled child premium would rise by £5 above the rate of inflation to £35.50 a week from April 2002.

In April 2003, the premium will rise by another £5 above inflation.

Paymaster General Dawn Primarolo announced similar changes to child tax credits.

From April 2002, the working families' tax credit (WFTC) and the disabled person's tax credit (DPTC) rates and thresholds will be increased by the government's inflation index of 1.7 per cent.

But credits for disabled children under 16 in the DPTC and the WFTC will go up by an extra £5 a week. Again, further increases of £5 are planned from April 2003.

Lorna Reith, chief executive of the Disability Alliance, said the increases would be of "significant help to lower income families who have a disabled child".

But she said the government still does not have a measure of the extra costs of disability, so "there is no measure of whether these sums of money are sufficient to lift families out of poverty".

Full details in cut out and keep Benefits uprating box (left)

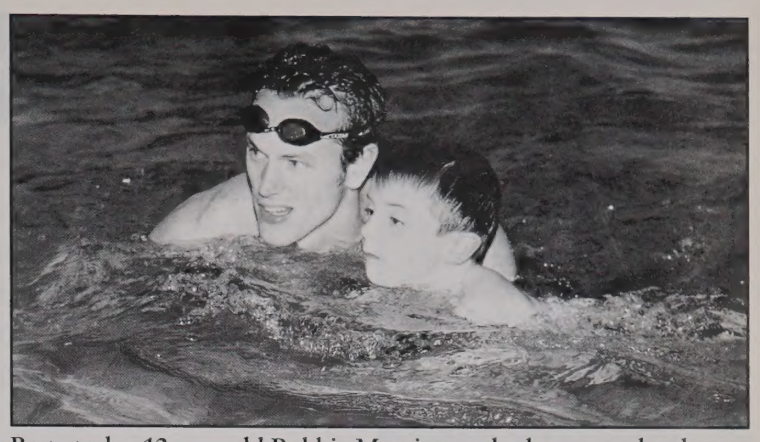
Subtitle song success

Deaf people in Wales have won their campaign to have more Welsh language songs subtitled in English by a tv channel.

The Channel S4C had originally said that songs would not be subtitled unless they were on children's programmes, there was an official translation or they were essential to the programme (*DN* November 2001).

But campaigners from the Wales Deaf Broadcasting Council complained to the Disability Rights Commission claiming it was not equal treatment.

They have now withdrawn their complaint after the channel promised to increase subtitling using a more flexible approach.



Best-stroke: 12-year-old Robbie Morrison, who has muscular dystrophy, swims alongside Olympic star Mark Foster at a Coventry Gala

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Car delays

More than half of those experiencing delays in swapping old cars for new under the Motability Scheme wait two weeks for the replacement, a survey has found.

Yet nearly three quarters of Motability customers say that such delays would cause them a "great deal" of difficulty.

The findings come from a MORI survey taking sample groups from among 5,000 people. Overall, 24 per cent of customers experience delays.

Speaking at a business update meeting for the scheme, John Leaman, automotive research manager at MORI, said dealers and relatives would often help. But he said: "At no stage are customers more likely to be stressed than when handing back one vehicle and taking delivery of another."

The research shows that 90 per cent of customers are satisfied with the scheme, but there is confusion among some about how much damage is allowed to cars under "fair wear and tear" and customers want more information on the scheme.

Motability has said that under a new system, in which it will resell all cars used by customers, delays will be reduced.

But Ed Lester, chief executive of Motability Finance Limited, the scheme's financial arm, also admitted that it failed some customers. He said: "I think there are a group whose needs are not at the moment being addressed by the scheme. We've got to make changes."

These could include greater flexibility on permitted mileage, and short-term contracts.

Council in the dock

A disabled man, who cannot walk safely around his town because of a memory impairment, is threatening to take his council to court claiming it has failed to find him a suitable home.

David Lazarus, 39, is unable to cross the road safely and forgets the way home because of amnesia caused by a cycling accident in 1988. He says the only suitable place to live is on the seafront, where he has lived independently for 12 years, because it makes him more certain of his whereabouts.

Mr Lazarus, who has been in bed and breakfast accommodation for 16 months, said: "The council just does not understand my condition."

Brighton and Hove City Council said his problems weren't so serious that he needed to live on the seafront.

A spokesman said the council would make one more offer of "safe, affordable accommodation".

Top dog: Endal, trained by Canine Partners for Independence, showed (*from left*) Chris Moon, MP Tim Loughton, Baroness Flather and Allen Parton how he puts dirty laundry in the washing machine.

Care home 'stealth' tax

Disabled residents of another care home have been handed council tax bills after being "reassessed" by tax officials.

Last month *DN* reported that visually impaired residents of a home in Somerset were facing council tax bills because their rooms had been improved to meet new care standards.

Now some residents of Dolphin Court, a residential home in Southend-on-Sea, are facing tax bills of more than £500 after their council asked tax officials to reassess their accommodation.

A spokeswoman for John Grooms, which runs Dolphin Court, said a home in Norwich was also being threatened with new council tax bills.

She said: "We see it as a stealth tax on disabled people."

The Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) is reviewing the regulations and has released a consultation paper, which includes proposals to give local authorities the right to offer council tax exemptions.

The consultation document, Council Tax: A Consultation Paper on Proposed Charges for Second Homes and Long-Term Empty Homes, can be found on the DTLR website at www.dtlr.gov.uk.

A leaflet describing the consultation can be obtained free on 0870 122 6236.

News review

DN rounds up news covered in the mainstream media over the last few weeks

Heart bypass results

The survival rate of patients undergoing heart bypass surgery varies widely from hospital to hospital, according to new statistics.

More than three times as many people died in the worst performing hospitals as in the most successful, according to *The Times' Hospital Consultants' Guide*.

The best performing hospital in England was Bristol Royal Infirmary and the worst was Walsgrave Hospital in Coventry.

Bathing rights

A 93-year-old woman has won the right to be bathed by a female carer.

Una Penny, who lives in sheltered accommodation in south Gloucestershire, moved in with her family because she was told she would have to accept a male carer, due to staffing problems.

The council has now arranged for a female carer to visit Mrs Penny.

Stem cell research

Stem cell research using human embryos has been allowed to continue, despite emergency legislation to ban human cloning.

The laws were brought in after the High Court found that the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 did not make cloning illegal.

But regulations introduced in January 2001 allowing stem cell research to be used to find cures for medical conditions are not affected by the bill which was expected to become law as *DN* went to press.

Researcher quits

A researcher who controversially suggested a link between the combined measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine and bowel disease and autism has quit his job.

Dr Andrew Wakefield said he had been asked to leave the Royal Free Hospital in London because his work was unpopular.

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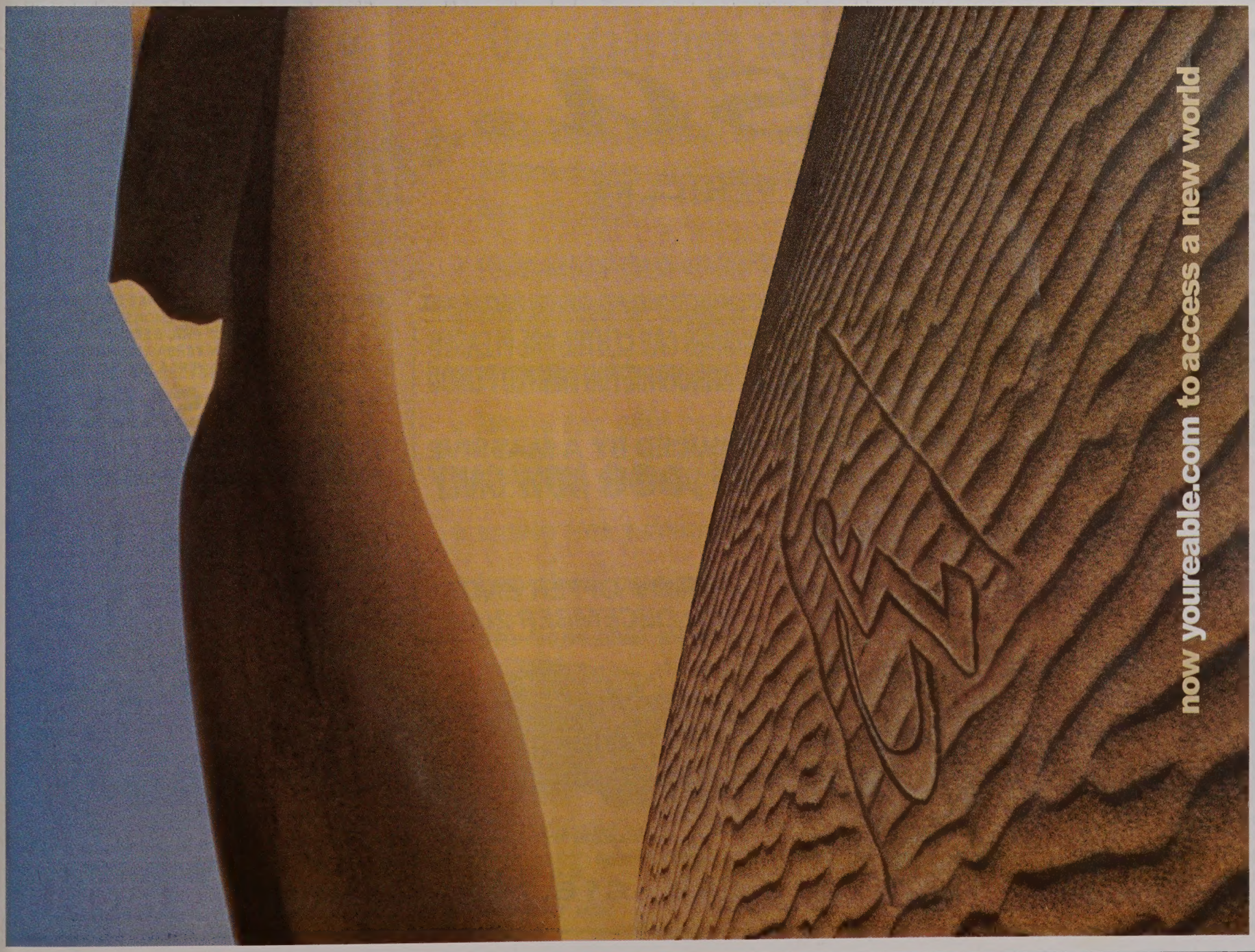

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GARY ROBERTS

Bear hug: Three-year-old Lauren Hamilton from Newcastle is able to cuddle her parents after being fitted with a new prosthetic arm

Hot stuff for Alzheimer's

A spice common in curries might lead to treatments for Alzheimer's disease, researchers claim.

Their findings may explain why India has the lowest incidence of Alzheimer's in the world.

Researchers from the University of California at Los Angeles looked into the effect of a compound called curcumin which is found in spices including turmeric.

The team, led by Dr Sally Frautschy, fed curcumin to middle aged and older rats and found that their was a reduction in the amount of amyloid plaques which form in the brains of people with Alzheimer's. It prevented memory loss and brain damage.

Dr Frautschy said a drug could be developed within three years.

Dr Richard Harvey, director of research at the Alzheimer's Society, said the research needed to be examined by other scientists. But he said: "If these findings do stand up to scientific scrutiny then this gives us yet another potential new treatment for this terrible disease."

Meanwhile, researchers in America have found that ginger can reduce pain from arthritis.

In a six week period, rheumatologists at the University of Miami Medical School carried out a trial involving 261 people with osteoarthritis of the knee. They found that those given ginger extract by pill gained a 13 per cent improvement in pain on standing up compared to those not getting the pill.

A spokesperson for the Arthritis Research Campaign said more exensive and longer trials were needed.

Diabetes drug trial

Doctors in Israel believe they can stop the progress of type 1 diabetes.

The condition can lead to heart disease, kidney disease, stroke and early death.

A trial headed by doctors at Hadassah Hebrew University involved 35 men with diabetes.

Researchers found that the destruction of vital insulin-producing pancreatic cells was reduced among people injected with the peptide drug, DiaPep227. This raises hopes of treatment after diagnosis.

But a spokesperson for Diabetes UK said the trial was very small and it would be hard to catch diabetes early enough for the drug to be used successfully at present.

Spina bifida gene hope

London based researchers have found a gene which could help in developing treatments for unborn babies with spina bifida.

The teams, led by Dr Philip Stanier at Imperial College and Professor Andrew Copp of University College London, have found a gene which causes spina bifida in mice.

Spina bifida affects one in 1,000 pregnancies and can lead to a baby being still born or, in milder cases, paralysis and incontinence.

Professor Copp, said: "The long term aim of our research is to develop new methods for preventing spina bifida, by treating the embryo as it develops during pregnancy".

The news came as other scientists warned that folic acid, which prevents spina bifida, should not be put into flour before its safety has been established.

But the Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus has called for the acid to be added.

Health-ear

Ear acupuncture and massage can help people with mental health problems, two small user-led studies have found.

The studies, backed by the Mental Health Foundation, found that among eight women receiving acupuncture to the ear there were improvements in anxiety levels and better sleep patterns.

Massage helped in another trial. Further studies included the benefits of going to Mosques for muslim men.

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Less chairs, less fair

Disability groups have criticised plans by a hospital to stop loaning wheelchairs to "occasional" users.

North Staffordshire Hospital and other health bodies have drawn up a three-year plan to "reshape and improve" their district wheelchair services, which are struggling with lengthy waiting lists.

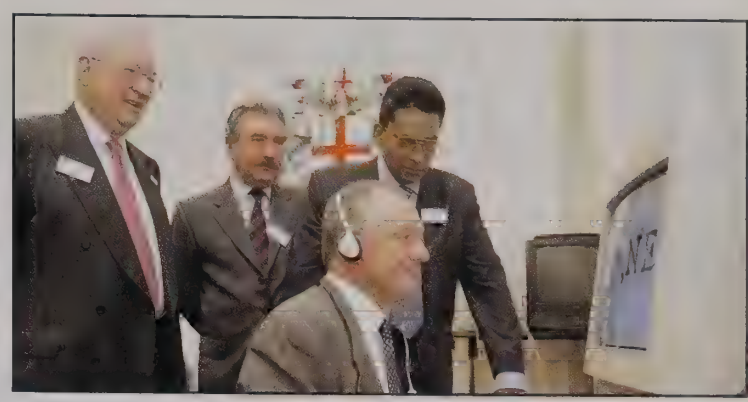
Under the plan, long-term loans would no longer be available to people who "only need a wheelchair for outdoor or occasional use".

It has yet to be approved, but could eventually provide up to an extra £750,000 for the services each year.

John Borthwick, chair of Disability Solutions, said: "There are probably several hundred people across the area who are going to be disenfranchised by this."

Pete Millington, from Disability West Midlands, said: "It just seems very discriminatory, cost-driven and inflexible."

But Alison Morris, wheelchair service manager at the hospital, said the loans for occasional users were "not provided in most other areas" and increased delays for everyone".



High techie: London mayor Ken Livingston visited the Pan-London Community Access to Training Partnership Project, run by Action for Blind People, in November.

Hospital hearing

The chief executive of Stoke Mandeville Hospital was due to face a disciplinary hearing as *DN* went to press, following allegations of irregularities in the reporting of waiting lists.

Sue Nicholls was suspended in the spring along with two senior managers.

One of these managers has since resigned and another has retired.

A spokesman for the trust which runs the hospital, home to the National Spinal Injuries Unit, said the hearing would be held before Christmas.

This autumn, the hospital was awarded no stars in the new NHS performance ratings.

The spokesman said: "I think it's fair to say that the trust has gone through a very rough ride.

"It is now the responsibility of the existing management to ensure that we can turn the corner and move forward in developing the hospital itself."

Bus buzz

More disabled Londoners will get trips on Dial-a-Ride buses under an agreement for London's six schemes to be taken over by the capital's main transport body.

The move follows a review which revealed serious flaws in the current scheme. At present, the six separate operators buy fuel and arrange maintainance separately and customers can not always go where they want.

The plan for Transport for London (TfL) to take over running the scheme will bring maintainance and fuel purchasing under single contracts, leading to savings for the £13.5m scheme. This will be used to improve services.

Sean Thompson, director of DaRT, the Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard Users' Association, said he was appalled at some of the review's findings on the way the scheme has been run.

He said: "I'm delighted we are going to see some progress.

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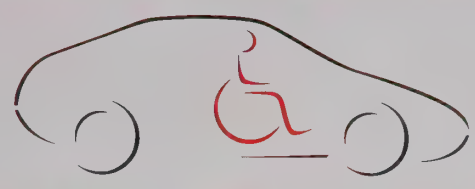

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All About Jamil

It's being billed as one of the bravest TV comedies in years, and it stars a 13-year old with cerebral palsy. John Pring meets *All About Me*'s Jamil Dhillon

The camera pans slowly across a kitchen, past the table, a family photograph and a cuckoo clock, before it alights on Raj, a 13-year-old boy.

Nothing unusual for the first scene of a new BBC1 sitcom, except that Raj uses a wheelchair and the actor who plays Raj, Jamil Dhillon, is disabled himself.

All About Me, made by the independent production company Celador, has been described by BBC1 controller Lorraine Heggessey as "one of the bravest comedies to appear on British TV for years".

Not only does it feature a mixed race couple, who each have children from previous marriages, but one of those children, Raj, has cerebral palsy (cp).

However, producer Mike Whitehill says the sitcom is simply an attempt to put together "some of the common elements of life which you never see on television".

Jamil appears alongside comedy veterans Jasper Carrott and Meera Syal and four other young actors.

Although Raj has no speech, he has a central part in the sitcom. "A lot of the programme revolves around this character, because everyone tells Raj their feelings and their thoughts – he keeps the family secrets," says Jamil.

Jamil got an audition through the Half Moon Young People's Theatre in Stepney which he has been attending on and off for several years.

"They saw a lot of people for the part," says Jamil, "but a lot of people they saw couldn't control their muscle movement. They wanted somebody who could stay still on camera and they found it hard to find somebody who could do that."

'They have not done this before. They are very inexperienced with having disabled actors and they are not very prepared. But it is not one of those things you can learn in a day'

I meet Jamil in a break from rehearsals at Elstree Studios in north London. He has already been filming and rehearsing for about a month.

He is a fan of both Carrott and Syal. "I like both of them. They are very nice people. I think they feel as if somehow they should make friends with me because I am in a wheelchair, which is really nice. They have made more of an effort.

"Because Meera is a mum herself and has that sort of mum feel about her, she acts like a mum on the set and is really nice to all the children and adults. And she's a great actress."

Coming soon to a screen near you: Jamil (*above*) stars alongside top names including Jasper Carrott and Meera Syal (*above left*)

But he admits that sometimes there can be a focus on his disability on set which makes him uncomfortable.

Although Jamil is a pupil at Homerton College of Technology in Hackney, he previously spent some rather unhappy time at a special school.

But he has been able to use that experience. For instance, he has used memories of friends with cp who were more disabled than himself to develop the character of Raj.

Before rehearsals began, Celador worked with the Bobath Centre for children with cp in East Finchley and the National Institute of Conductive Education in Birmingham in an attempt to learn more about the condition.

Even so, the first month was not easy for Jamil.

"It's not their fault, but because they have not done this before, they are very inexperienced with having disabled actors and they are not very prepared," says Jamil. "But it is not one of those things you can learn in a day."

Filming on location was particularly tough. Changing facilities were cobbled together. On one occasion, he even had to change outside.

The first hotel Celador booked for Jamil and his actress mum Kavita turned out to be not nearly as accessible as it had claimed.

Celador was also unable to find a single catering company that had a vehicle with disabled access, so staff had to organise separate facilities for Jamil.

But Jamil sees a positive side to the lack of disability awareness he has encountered.

"To me that is excellent, because if somebody comes and they are not prepared, next time they will be prepared. The reason why they have not bothered before is that there are hardly any disabled actors on telly," he says.

Mike Whitehill admits Celador has been on "a learning curve" and is anxious to remedy the problems.

"We prepared for Jamil as best we could, but I think it is fair to say we have made mistakes," he says. "The TV and film industry itself is not set up for the disabled."

As for the future, Jamil has watched the career ups and downs of his mother over the years – she appears in episode two under her stage name, Vinny Dhillon – and is not con-vinced that his future lies in acting. He is considering instead a career as a web-designer.

In the meantime, he has a job to do.

All About Me *is expected to be shown in a prime time slot on BBC1 early in the new year.*

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A year for Autism

Next year is Autism Awareness Year – about time, say campaigners who are battling to raise its profile. John Pring investigates

Five-year-old Charin Corea was being his normal hyperactive self alongside his parents in the disability queue at Heathrow Airport when an immigration officer screamed at him to keep still.

Charin has been barred from a takeaway restaurant's play area. He has also been verbally abused in the high street, told to wait outside in the garden so he wouldn't disrupt the Christmas play, and forced to sit on his own during a Christmas party.

All because he is autistic and has a communication disorder.

His parents, Ivan and Charika, became so angry at the years of frustration they faced in fending off ignorance and trying to secure a basic education and speech therapy for Charin, that they began to complain.

They wrote hundreds of letters to MPs, business people, local politicians, voluntary organisations and celebrities.

"We were so passionate about it and driven to raise awareness about the condition that we have not stopped," says Mr Corea.

At first, no-one replied, but eventually their perseverance paid off. MPs wrote back to share stories of constituents with similar concerns; there was an adjournment debate in the Commons; and, just before the general election, 153 MPs signed an early day motion backing the Coreas' suggestion to make 2002 Autism Awareness Year.

The British Institute for Brain Injured Children and The Disabilities Trust took joint responsibility for organising the year, an idea already backed by 240 other bodies.

The year will include fundraising, regional seminars, awareness raising events, national days of prayer for autistic people, and two major conferences.

There is already an Autism Awareness 2002 website, launched in October by Health Minister Jacqui Smith.

Mr Corea wants the government to address the shortage of speech therapists and teachers trained to work with autistic children, and perhaps set up specialist autistic units that could each help a cluster of schools.

Thanks to the family's persistence, Charin himself is now getting the help he needs at his primary school.

But the wider levels of ignorance about autism still cause his parents distress.

"Charin has had to face a lot of instances where people still don't know what autism is," says Mr Corea.

One of the concerns parents and charities hope will be addressed during the year is the frequent failure of professionals to diagnose autistic spectrum disorders, particularly those with Asperger syndrome.

Jean Burgess, from Stroud in Gloucestershire, has a 28-year-old son with Asperger. Robert was only diagnosed three years ago. She had originally been told he was manic depressive.

"A lot of psychiatrists are really not trained in Asperger," she says. "GPs are even worse. They do not understand Asperger at all."

'A lot of psychiatrists are really not trained in Asperger. GPs are even worse. They do not understand Asperger at all'

Because her son does not have a learning disability, he receives no training that might help him become more independent, and just a couple of hours a week of outreach support.

"He would almost be better off if he was more disabled," says his mum. "My son is desperate to learn how to connect with other people. He wants social skills and there is nothing."

Carolann Jackson, from Colchester in Essex, has an 18-year-old daughter, Nita, who has Asperger syndrome. She has a similar story to tell.

"Nobody knew what was wrong with my daughter. Psychiatrists, doctors, paediatricians, everybody basically said 'bad parent, bad parent'," says Mrs Jackson.

Nita was eventually diagnosed at the age of 15.

Once an autistic person reaches adulthood, their problems only increase.

Making waves: Cahrin Corea (*above*) with parents Ivan and Charika and (*below*) Robert Burgess with mum Jean.

A report by the National Autistic Society (NAS) for its Autism Awareness Week 2001* found only 12 per cent of autistic people towards the higher end of intellectual ability were in full-time paid employment. This dropped to two per cent of those with more severe learning impairments.

"I know one lad who has a double first in economics but he has been out of work for seven years," says Mrs Jackson.

"The solution is to change hearts and minds. Make allowance for difference.

"My daughter Nita looks beautiful, slim, attractive, clever – she has just had a play produced at Brentwood Theatre. But she can't work."

People with Asperger syndrome have difficulty finding employment because they have trouble with crucial aspects of work such as prioritising tasks and team-working, she says.

Even so, she believes her daughter could find work if given the right training.

Dr Stephen Ladyman, chair of the all-party parliamentary group on autism, says: "One of the biggest jobs we have to do is make people realise how many autistic people there are, what the cost of it is and what services they need."

He believes the government should agree to screen every child for autism at a very young age, and repeat that screening throughout its school life.

"The earlier we intervene, the better the outcome," he says.

In March 2001, the government commissioned the Medical Research Council to carry out a detailed review of the current state of knowledge about autism and to suggest areas of possible future research. The results were due to be published as *DN* went to press.

Not only has the review taken evidence from scientists, it has also talked to carers and families about their experiences.

After all, as the determined campaigning of Ivan and Charika Corea has shown, it is often the families who are best equipped to point the professionals in the right direction.

** Ignored or Ineligible? is available free from the NAS by calling its press office on 020 7903 3593*

The website for the NAS, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2002, is www.nas.org.uk

The Autism Awareness 2002 website is at www.autism-awareness.org.uk. For advice on autism, call the NAS helpline on 0870 6008585.

Spreading the message: Health Minister Jacqui Smith launched the Autism Awareness 2002 website in October.

'Every day is like Groundhog day'

Two of Carole Barber's three sons have autistic spectrum disorders, which means that every day is a repeat of the day before. Here she writes about the family's delicate daily routine.

TERRY RUTHERFORD

Train of thought: Carole Barber and son Matthew at home.

Can you imagine what life would be like if every day was a repeat of yesterday, and you knew that tomorrow would be just the same as today? That is life with autism.

The 1993 film *Groundhog Day* is about a man who has to relive his worst ever day, time and time again, because he is stuck in his own personal time-warp. Unfortunately, when you have to do it for real, day in, day out, it is not so funny.

I have three sons: Robert, David and Matthew. David and Matthew both have autistic spectrum disorders. Things that we all take for granted, like popping to the corner shop for a pint of milk, are no longer the norm and some days are simply off the menu.

'I work hard to teach my sons the skills that they will both need to live in a mainstream world. Sadly none of these things are included in the national curriculum'

My day begins when Matthew, who is four, and has high functioning autism, opens his eyes. Even if I have just woken up I must be alert.

The first hour that Matthew is out of bed will determine the rest of my day. I have to carry him downstairs and into the living room. He has to sit on the middle seat of the sofa. I then have to switch on the gas fire, regardless of the weather, switch on the television, and open the curtains and the blinds. This done I have to leave the room and not enter again until his breakfast is ready.

If I do one of these things in the wrong order the day can be written off before it even begins. Matthew becomes terribly distressed if I alter this routine. He also has no sense of danger so I have to keep a close eye on him. Take your eyes off him for a second or go to the loo and he may try to jump down the stairs. All of them.

Autism is a social and communication disorder but it impacts on every single one of your senses. It determines what you can and what you can't eat, drink or wear. It is responsible for over and under sensitivity to almost anything and has a profound effect on what is and is not possible, in your daily life.

Matthews's routines were set in stone before we even suspected that he had autism. Since being diagnosed last May we have worked very hard to dilute most of them, but his morning and bedtime routines are just too painful for him to surrender at the moment.

If we successfully begin the day then Matthew, who has a never-ending supply of energy, will begin his quest for exploration.

This does not suit my 14-year-old son, David, who has Asperger syndrome. He is much more comfortable sitting working at his computer.

David has been out of school for three years now following a traffic accident whilst going to school. His diagnosis followed the accident, something I had been fighting for since he was three years old. It explains why David has always been unhappy and uncomfortable mixing in groups.

The change from primary to secondary school was unbearable for David. He couldn't cope in a "whole school" environment. He has no learning difficulties and academically he shines, but there does not seem to be a place for him to continue his education. This happens all-too-often to children with high functioning autism.

It is widely misunderstood that people with autism have little or no speech, that they do not enjoy physical contact, and that they sit rocking themselves all day and live in a world of their own.

This is only true if they are at the bottom end of the autistic spectrum. My sons have fluent speech but also have problems reading our facial expressions and body language. They also take things literally. If I tell Matthew that he is on fire he will look for the fire engine.

Whilst they can take refuge in their own world, this is usually because we do not make the effort to include them in ours. There are no visual clues to alert us that there may be a problem. Often Matthew is labelled as being naughty if he cries at the supermarket checkout. But he is not crying for sweets; he just likes to watch the tins rolling along the shopping belt.

A small amount of awareness can change the quality of the day for us both. Our supermarket is now aware and makes the effort. It makes a huge difference to us.

I work hard to teach my sons the skills that they will both need to live in a mainstream world. Sadly none of these things are included in the national curriculum and social inclusion has not altered this.

Social skills, effective communication and most of all a confidence in their own abilities are what they need most.

Perhaps, if I can help to raise awareness, we may make some progress not only for my two loving sons but also for the many others like them.

National Autistic Society Helpline, Tel: 0870 600 8585
Website: www.nas.org.uk

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Big save: The exemption means that disabled drivers won't be priced out of the capital, but a £10 annual fee may still be unreasonable

Charges dropped

Blue badge holders will be entitled to a full discount on central London charges – a good start, says Douglas Campbell

Transport for London, the organisation that manages transport and traffic policy in Greater London, has delivered a welcome Christmas present to disabled people.

In a press release, Derek Turner, managing director of Transport for London Street Management, announced a series of recommended changes to the proposed central London congestion charging scheme. He said: "A 100 per cent discount is now proposed for all disabled people who are blue badge holders, whether they are Londoners or are visitors to the capital".

In the original proposals the discount was only to have applied to blue badge holders who live in Greater London.

This had been condemned by organisations representing disabled people and by the Disabled Persons' Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC).

They had all criticised the discrepancy that existed between disabled people who lived in the capital and those who lived outside, but needed to enter central London.

There remain some further problems to be resolved. It is still proposed that there will be a yearly charge of £10 to cover registration for the 100 per cent discount. As so may disabled people have very low incomes, or depend on means tested benefits, this really is a further tax on disability that will have to be fought. Even £10 a year is unfair as people without a disability can choose to avoid the charge completely by using alternative transport, such as buses and the underground.

The actual process to obtain the discount has still to be worked out.

The charging and exemption system is to be based on automatic cameras reading the number plates of passing vehicles.

It is likely that disabled people will have to notify the operators of the registration number of the vehicle they are using each time they enter the charging zone – perhaps by telephone or over the Internet. This will mean that badge holders who don't drive but who use others' cars will still be eligible for charge exemption.

Any system of registration will have to be a little bureaucratic as it is vital that the opportunities for abuse are minimised. If there is abuse there is bound to be enormous pressure to remove the discount arrangements.

This good news shows that the combined efforts of disability organisations, including The Disabled Drivers' Association and The Disabled Drivers' Motor Club, can be effective.

Disabled people living in London can now give a further push by contacting their local member of the Greater London Authority (GLA) and complaining about the unfair annual £10 charge.

Hopefully this success, provided it is confirmed, will set the model for other charging schemes that will be introduced in the future in other parts of Britain.

The proposals will be published for public consultation and a decision will be made in on whether to proceed with the plan in February 2002 .

To contact your local GLA member call 020 7983 4100.

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Letters to the Editor

Send your letters to the editor
Mary Wilkinson, Disability Now,
6 Market Road, London N7 9PW,
minicom: 020 7619 7332,
fax: 020 7619 7331,
e-mail: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

ILLUSTRATIONS: CLARE CURTIS

They catch you in America

Here is an example of disabled parking bay enforcement from our recent visit to Florida, USA. "Enforced" parking spaces cover 99 per cent of all disabled parking and are rigorously enforced ($250 equals £180).

I actually picked up a ticket at a supermarket because the warden did not recognise our orange badge. The new European blue badges should be much less of a problem as they are almost the same format as those in the US.

The US is generally much more friendly and accommodating to wheelchair users in all public places. In New York, public buses must have wheelchair access. Accessible airport minibuses are available too.

Roy Targonski
Dudley, West Midlands

DLA losers

Adults with mental health illnesses are also in danger of not receiving their entitlement to Disability Living Allowance (*DN* November). Barriers they face can include difficulty in remembering information requested; reluctance to provide information to "offialdom"; panic attacks caused by an intimidating atmosphere; and the insensitive attitude of staff.

Martin Ball
Mental After Care Association
London WC1

Naive to attack asylum seekers and immigrants

I was angered and saddened to read the letter "Charity begins at home" (*DN*, December).

As readers of *DN*, I imagine most of us know the humiliating, stressful and unpleasant process involved in claiming benefits. The Benefits Agency frequently seems to operate from the premise that the individual is trying to "con" the system.

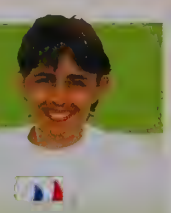
Asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants are treated at least as badly as the rest of us – usually far worse.

It is naive to think that stopping foreign aid and depriving immigrants of benefit and care to which they are entitled will have any effect on the welfare of those whom the author deems to be worthy recipients. People who do not work in this country, whether due to age, disability or other cause, are not as valued by our society as those who do work.

It is these attitudes which need to be addressed if the situation is to change.

D Gordon
London SE15

Team Talk



Tanni Grey-Thompson

Stoke Mandeville has been awarded one of the biggest National Lottery sporting grants. £5m has been given to redevelop and rebuild what everyone considers to be the "spiritual home" of the Paralympics – where national and then international competition began in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

In one year, 1984, Stoke Mandeville hosted only one half of the Paralympics: wheelchair sport came to the UK and other disability groups competed in New York.

For me, it was where my life as an athlete began. I competed there in my first National Games aged 12 and broke my first junior record there at 15. I was awarded my first international vest, took the athlete's vote at one Game, and met my personal coach Lenni there (she was over with the Australian team).

Perhaps, most importantly, I met my husband there – even though he took the mick out of me at a training weekend and I thought I hated him!

It is sometimes hard to reconcile the place where we had so many glorious summers with winter squad training sessions in December. Could the wind cut through you like a knife! At the international games, the best in the world would be there; in December it could be two men and a dog.

I also remember taking my O-level and A-level books there one year, because the National clashed with my exams.

I'm a bit sad those dorms might be going – it was the closest I ever got to Mallory Towers (Enid Blyton girly books about boarding school).

But if Stoke Mandeville is to continue hosting the best in the world, things need to change. It now boasts the best track surface and the rest should follow.

It will also go on being an arena where young talent can develop, improve and see where they need to be for the future.

Whether more disabled people should be included in mainstream clubs and governing bodies is another issue. It doesn't happen to the extent that it should.

What we have now, though, is a chance to provide sporting opportunities for many disabled people in a multi-sport environment, where people and coaches know what they are doing.

Tanni Grey-Thompson is a Paralympic multi-gold medallist.

PC Pulse will be back next month – Editor

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It's time to start thinking about holidays for 2001 – *DN* launches its three-month holiday series to inspire you

Cruising in the fast lane

Marion Bull recounts her Caribbean voyage on the world's fastest cruise liner

A pelican guided us into port at Puerto Rico, careering overhead like some computer-generated prehistoric creature. I hadn't even noticed the port yet, but San Juan turned out to be one of the most colourful places I'd seen anywhere.

Wandering through the blue cobblestone streets of Spanish painted colonial houses, constructed from coral rock, it was like turning the pages of a Dulux colour chart.

Then on to El Morro, the massive 16th century fortress with its labyrinth of dungeons facing the Atlantic. By sunset, I was sitting prettily outside a purple café with orange and turquoise interior walls, having a pale green drink. I didn't like to ask what it was, but everybody smiled and nodded politely.

We had arrived aboard a new cruise ship and the world's fastest, the *Olympic Voyager*, recently renamed the *Olympia Voyager* – amazingly, because of complaints from the American Olympic Committee that the names were too similar (Earl's Court beware).

With a maximum speed of 30 knots, no other ship can match her itineraries, and we had longer time ashore at each port of call. From the Caribbean to steamy South America, the ship generated curiosity wherever we docked, with her unique monohull design.

In Trinidad, a steel band greeted us at the port. Six hours later, after I had returned from viewing the stunning spectacle of 12,000 scarlet ibis at the Caroni swamp, fluttering down on mangroves at sunset like exotic tree blossom, there they were, still bashing the oil drums. Steel bands were invented here. We could hardly forget it.

I had missed a great photo opportunity on arrival at the bird sanctuary. The local guide pointed out a huge tree snake curled up between branches, but the small motor boat lurched off while I was still loading the camera.

"It's gone!" I pointed to the disappearing tree.

"I'll find you another one," said the guide, consolingly.

Soon I'd forgotten, because one of the first of many swamp crabs had climbed on board and was doing a rhythmic dance over my feet.

That favourite haunt of Blackbeard the pirate, St Thomas, one of the US Virgin Islands now favoured by honeymooners, was an altogether more civilised affair.

The main street, behind Charlotte Amalie harbour in the old part of town, while not exactly paved with gold, is at bursting point with gem shops. There are semi-precious stones from Brazil, diamonds and Columbian emeralds. You can even get a ring made duty-free while you wait.

'Dark green outlying islands rested on a sparkling sea, and our ship had become a toy in a pond in the harbour below'

But I couldn't wait. I simply had to get to the top of a hill in sweltering heat to see Drake's Seat, then the idyllic Magens Bay beach, and a few plantation houses.

A tramway zooms 700 feet up to Paradise Point near Charlotte Amalie, to one of the best views in the Caribbean. Dark green outlying islands rested on a sparkling sea, and our ship had become a toy in a pond in the harbour below.

The *Olympia Voyager* has four fully-accessible staterooms with personal butler, and lifts to all floors. These are the most luxurious rooms on the ship, with large private patios opening on to deck. I saw some American wheelchair users on board, who said many excursions were accessible, but you should check with the tour manager on board.

The captain and most of the crew are Greek, and because of the relatively small size of this ship (25,000 tons, maximum 800 passengers), and a ratio of about one crew member to every two guests, there's always a friendly atmosphere.

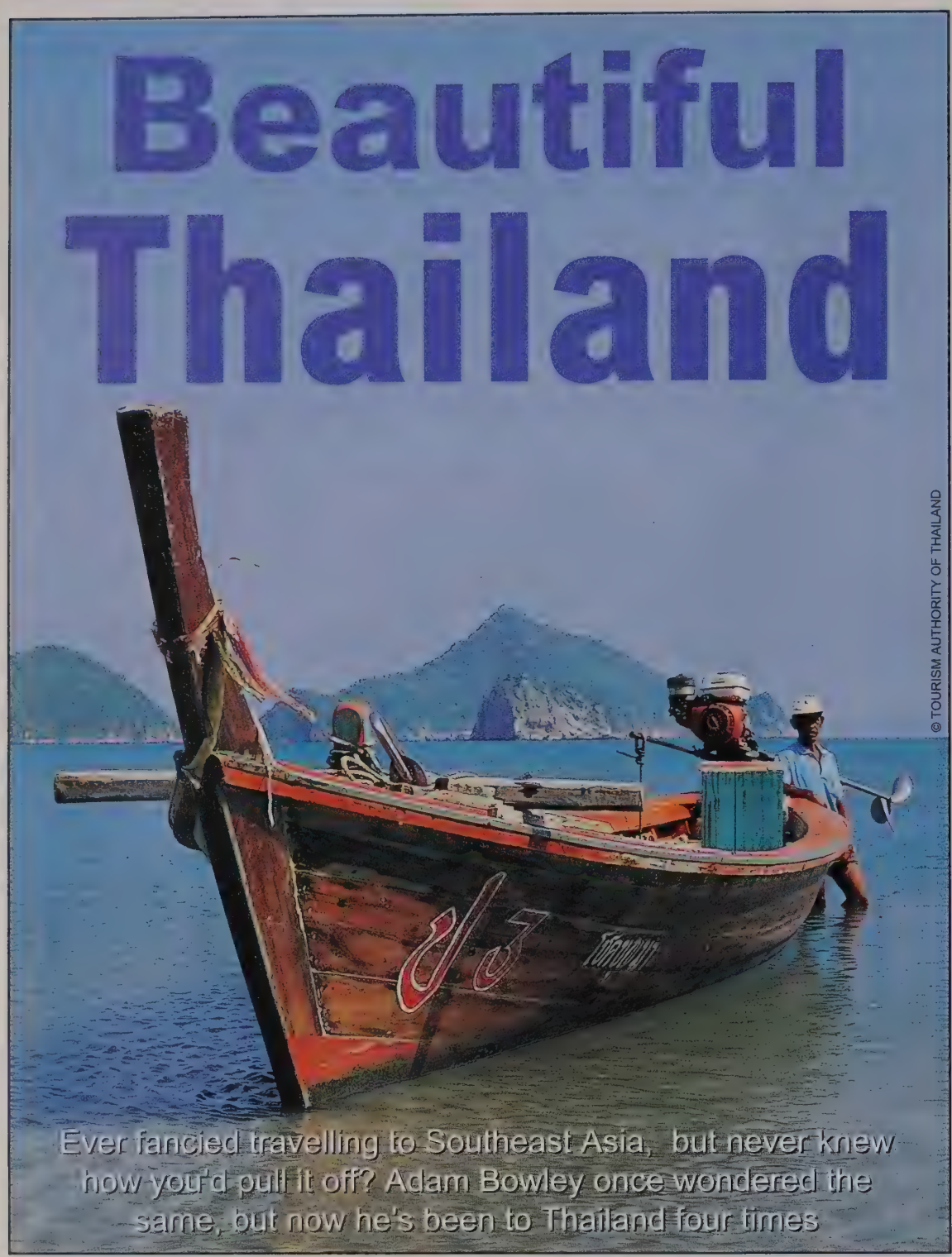
In January 2002 the *Olympia Voyager* sails for two months to the southernmost tip of Argentina from Florida and back, via Peru, Chile, Rio, and the Caribbean, but shorter cruises on sections of the route are available.

PICTURES: MARION BULL

All abroad: *Olympia Voyager* (*above*) and the tramway view (*below*)

Cruises from £616 (standard cabin based on two sharing) including all meals, excluding flights from the UK to Fort Lauderdale, taxes and optional excursions. For more information contact Royal Olympic Cruises, 189 Regent Street, London W1B 4JX, tel: 0800 358 3535, website: www.royalolympiccruises.com

Beautiful Thailand



© TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND

Ever fancied travelling to Southeast Asia, but never knew how you'd pull it off? Adam Bowley once wondered the same, but now he's been to Thailand four times

We had booked the flight to Thailand months in advance and spent the time wondering how we would get about the place. I looked frantically for information on independent wheelchair travel in Thailand, or anywhere else beyond the comforts of Western disability provision, and pretty much came up blank. My friend and I would have to wing it.

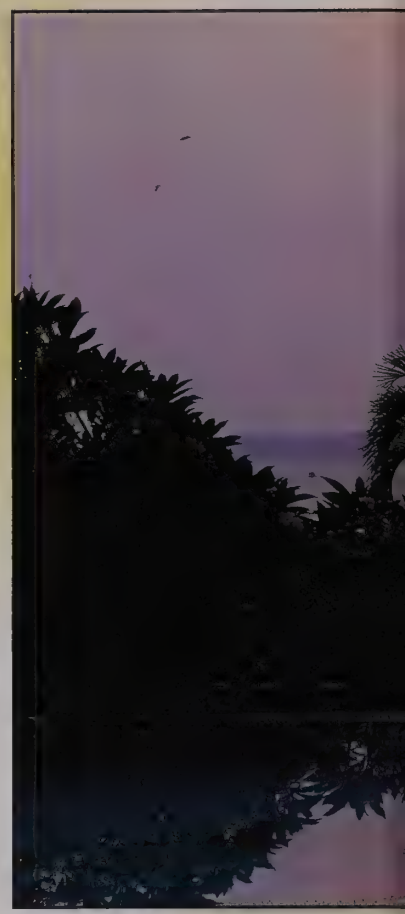
It is the Thai way to be courteous and helpful to strangers and this attitude makes negotiating the total lack of disability provision much easier.

The following year I went to the north and to the islands on my own. Since then, I have travelled alone several times independently.

As most of you will know, air travel is pretty easy for wheelchair users; you are ferried here and there and usually end up at the right destination.

Travelling independently means never knowing quite where you will be staying and the usual "traveller" thing is to head for the Khao San Road (like at the beginning of *The Beach*). You can pick up a meter taxi at Bangkok airport, which the airport staff will be happy to do for you.

The Khao San Road is very short and very crowded. Full



of stalls and crammed with guesthouses. Some of the best food on the planet is available from the little "warong" food stalls which appear there at night. The kerbs are high, up to around a foot, and pavements pretty much blocked all the way (this is true throughout Thailand) although the more expensive accommodation has level access and lifts. The first time

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we went we stayed in a ground floor room at the Khao San Palace (400 bhat), which has both.

The guesthouses/hotels in the area range from the basic to the downright seedy. If ever you find yourself without accommodation you can always store your bags at a hotel and sit up all night in a 24-hour bar until something comes up, dealing with the drunks and junkies as they occur.

Whenever I stay on Khao San I usually use the Privacy Hotel (180 bhat), which does not have level access (there is a step about a foot high) but does have ground floor rooms.

I should say that I'm lucky in that I am able to hop about *sans* wheelchair for a few yards and drag the wheelchair about a bit, even up a few steps, which makes things a little easier. I've hardly ever done this without offers of help, either from Thais or fellow travellers. You often have to forget your dignity (not that I have much) and do whatever is necessary to get about.

The Thais are not used to seeing wheelchair users travelling in this way and you soon become recognised by the street people, stallholders and tuk-tuk drivers, which can be useful. (The tuk-tuk is a kind of three-wheeled, highly decorated, open plan taxi with a bench seat for passengers. Once you have clambered in there is enough room for two people, a folded wheelchair and a couple of rucksacks.)

There are various ways of getting beyond Bangkok, the two most obvious being train and bus, with airlines making a costly third.

Tickets for anywhere in Thailand and even further afield can be bought from the travel agents along Khao San. As with most things, it's always a good idea to talk to fellow travellers and consult the guidebook. Personally, I have always preferred the Lonely Planet's no-nonsense info to the prettier pictures of other guides. There are also updates on its website which can be invaluable. Most towns now have internet cafés.

Your ticket usually includes a minibus to the bus station where the large VIP buses have aircon and toilets. If you are going to the islands in the Bay of Thailand, they'll include the boat ticket too.

Getting onto the boats can be a hazardous matter. Sometimes the only way is to be manhandled by sailors (not an unattractive prospect to some) or to crawl along narrow gangplanks as your wheelchair is lifted into the boat by its dangerously detachable armrests!

A ride in a pickup truck to the beach of your choice comes next, then the haggling for whichever hut-on-the-beach you fancy. I always try for one within crawling distance of the sea, as wheelchairs and sand don't go together well. If you go for a dip, the guesthouse staff won't mind keeping an eye on you, should you ask them.

The surrounding terrain is mostly scrubby grass and uneven, concrete roads with some alarming inclines on which I have had many a spill. I reckon the beach is the hardest place to get about but when you are lying in a hammock in the tropical heat who wants to go far? Most beach guesthouse complexes have their own restaurant attached.

Travelling north to Chang Mai by train is a great way to see the country. I would recommend the sleeper train if you can manage to clamber your way aboard and find a space in which to cram your wheelchair.

The views change as you leave the sprawling slums on the outskirts of Bangkok and enter the countryside with its paddy fields punctuated by the occasional Buddhist temple, until finally the mountains appear on the horizon. And that's another place entirely.

Prices to Bangkok, depending on the time of year, from around £400 upwards. You'll need about £100 a week to keep you going out there; the exchange rate is usually 55/60 baht to the £1.

Bangkok and beyond: Adam finds time to relax on the beach *(top)* in a hammock *(centre)* and with friends *(below)*.

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Spread your wings

If you're after a break designed with disabled people in mind, then try the Winged Fellowship Trust, says Ellen Ryan

Sail away: WFT run a range of activity holidays, including sailing

The Winged Fellowship Trust (WFT) provides holidays for disabled people with locations and activities to choose from around the world.

UK holidays

There are specially-adapted holiday centres in Southport, Nottingham, Southampton, Essex and near Bodmin in Cornwall. Each centre offers a range of activities, with a number of special interest weeks running throughout the year. Netley Waterside House near Southampton, for example, offers a drama week in February. Jubilee Lodge in Essex runs a holistic week, also in February, while Skylarks near Nottingham hosts an information technology week in March. Each centre also runs activities geared to different age groups throughout the year. These include fishing, cricket, *cordon bleu* cookery and clubbing.

Assisted holidays overseas

If you're after a holiday overseas, then you can choose from a list of locations including China, Miami and the Florida Keys. A bit closer to home are Northern Ireland, Spain, Egypt, Norway, Morocco, Belgium, Greece and Germany.

Holidays for visually impaired people

Earlier this year, WFT took over management of Guide Dogs Holidays from Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

WFT holidays for visually impaired people take place in the UK and abroad. They range from sun-worshipping or touring holidays, to long and short-haul adventure and activity holidays including safari, cycling, skiing, canoeing, sailing and walking.

There are also a range of special interest holidays for those interested in, among other things, music, wildlife, dancing and narrowboating.

Churchtown Farm

WFT recently acquired Churchtown Farm. This specially-adapted activity centre in Cornwall is of particular interest to younger disabled people.

Facilities and activities on offer include sailing, an outdoor assault course, an indoor climbing wall and a swimming pool.

More information

The 2002 WFT holiday brochure will soon be available. To order a copy, ring the reservations team on 020 7833 2594 or e-mail them at admin@wft.org.uk.

Ellen Ryan is director of fundraising & marketing at Winged Fellowship Trust

Volunteering

The success of WFT relies on more than 4000 volunteers each year.

If you're interested in volunteering, you can contact the booking team on 020 7833 2594 or e-mail admin@wft.org.uk.

Sighted guides are also needed for visually-impaired guests, although guides pay a reduced holiday fee rather than volunteering their services. For further details call 01539 735080.

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The caravan is fully adapted for wheelchairs and sleeps a maximum of nine people. For a brochure contact:
Thrift Charitable Trust
87 Duke Street, Barrow in Furness
Cumbria, LA14 1RH
Tel: 01229 434039

The Lyneal Trust (Reg. Charity) provides canal and canalside holidays in Shropshire on two specially built canal boats with ramps, hydraulic lift and steering. Facilities also include canalside accommodation for up to 16 people. Day trips on canal also available. Telephone: 01743 252748. Website: www.lyneal-trust.org.uk

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Cottage brochure, Miriam Toosey, tel/fax: 01787 372343. Booking forms and full information, George Tickner, The Lin Berwick Trust (registered charity no: 1083039), 020 8595 7056.

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Peace of mind

Nothing can be taken for granted in the travel world these days, and it can be harder when a traveller is disabled. Dan Batten looks at various scenarios to see what you can do

Q It's my first time travelling abroad and I need a passport. How do I apply for one and what will it cost me?

A You can apply online at the United Kingdom Passport Service (UKPS) website (*www.ukpa.org.uk*) or visit one of their regional passport offices throughout Britain and Northern Ireland (*helpline: 0870 521 0410*). Alternatively, pick up a form from a post office or a branch of Worldchoice Travel. If you have a hearing impairment, call the UKPS' minicom line (*tel: 0870 240 8090*) for help. Large print forms and completion instructions are available on audiotape for people with visual impairments.

A first-time standard passport for adults by post costs £28, and for applications at a UKPS office or Worldchoice, add £12 and £4 respectively.

Q What do I do if I need care on my holiday?

A You could look at agencies that specialise in accompanied holidays for disabled people, such as Chalfont Line (*tel: 020 8997 3799, www.chalfontline.co.uk*) or Access Travel (*tel: 01942 888844, www.access-travel.co.uk*). Or contact the St John's Ambulance Service (*tel: 020 7235 5231*), who provide nursing assistance and escorts for inland trips.

Q How can I be sure that my holiday destination will be suitable for my needs?

A Holiday Care (*tel 01293 774535, website www.holidaycare.org.uk*) has over 100 information packs on holidays and accommodation ideas for disabled people. It also has information on accessible venues in over 40 countries, and information packs about companies who can supply oxygen, companion services etc. RADAR (*tel: 020 7250 3222, website: www.radar.org.uk*) have fact packs that give tips on planning, transport and accommodation at home and abroad. If you book through a high street agent, make sure you have a list of questions ready that you want answering. Or, if you know anyone who has already visited and knows about your needs, ask them.

Q I've lost my passport. Who can help me?

A If you lose your passport in the UK, you'll need to fill out section three and the rest of the standard passport application form as if you were applying for the first time. If you lose it abroad, contact the nearest British consulate or embassy who will be able to help you. You will need to pay for a replacement passport.

Q What's the safest way to carry money?

A Ideally, don't take currency. If it is stolen, you won't get it back. Take travellers cheques, available from participating agents including banks and building societies. When you receive your cheques, make a note of the serial numbers on them. If they are stolen, contact the local service centre, and you should receive a replacement cheque within 24 hours. Visit *www.americanexpress.co.uk*

Q I may feel ill and need treatment right away. Where can I go for help and what should I take with me?

A Before you travel abroad, fill out an E111 form, available in the *Health Advice for Travellers* booklet available at main post offices, and have it signed and stamped there. The form is free and, providing you are travelling to a country within the European Union, you will receive the same treatment as nationals of the country. You *must* keep your E111 form with your important documents, or you won't be treated.

If you feel ill, go to the local hospital. Take relevant material on medicines you take, the medicines themselves, information on your disability and/or allergies you may have, along with phone numbers of anyone you want contacted.

Q I want to be able to stay in contact and be reached while I'm abroad. Will my mobile phone work?

A Many handsets on all networks, including pay as you go , are able to roam when they are abroad. This means that your phone will lock on to the partner your home network (eg Orange) has in that country. It is worth asking your network's customer services department if your handset will work abroad before you leave. Remember, as well as paying an increased rate for calls you make, you will also be charged for the international part of any calls you receive from the UK.

Q I want to check that my destination is safe. Who can tell me if it is?

A The Foreign and Commonwealth office travel advice line and website offers help on which countries are safe and where you may find potential danger. They also offer tips on what to do before you leave, country specific travellers' advice and what to do if anything goes wrong. (*tel: 020 7008 0232/0233, website: www.fco.gov.uk/travel*)

Q Money's tight. Where can I find a cheap holiday?

A If you can go at short notice, all travel agents offer last-minute deals which can be substantially cheaper than booking up in advance. Unfortunately, you will need to be able to travel independently or organise your own care to take advantage of these deals. Websites such as *www.travel-travel.com* offer cheap deals, but it is vital that any site you book with is Association of British Travel Agents bonded.

Q My wheelchair breaks down. How can I fix it or find a temporary replacement?

A Make sure you take a basic repair kit with you. In the light of recent security tightening, don't take any sharp implements, as this is likely to get you thrown off the plane. If you think you might need a replacement, Holiday Care have details of equipment suppliers in most destinations.

MORE HOLIDAY INFORMATION ON PAGE 33

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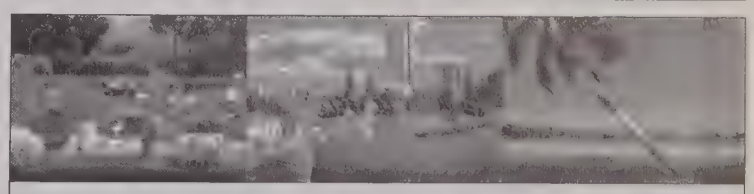

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Our 2002 brochure featuring City Breaks, Europe and Self-Drive Holidays is out now together with our North America brochure. Please indicate when you contact us which brochure/s you would like to receive.

The magic kingdom

Think Walt Disney World is just for kids? Andrew Bichard keeps going back every year, and finds it appeals to anyone.

ANDREW BICHARD

It's a small world after all: Mickey and Minnie live it up for the fans (*above*), while Andrew gets a bear hug from a famous celebrity (*below, left*). And the staff at Disney world couldn't be more helpful (*below, right*).

My wife and I are now grandparents, so why is it that we have taken our holidays at Walt Disney World every year for the last five years? Isn't it just for kids?

Not a bit. For a start, it is the most accessible holiday destination I've been to. And there really is something for everyone – even grandparents.

Disney World extends over 47 square miles. Besides the four main parks, there are three water-parks, five golf courses, nature walks, health clubs and more than 20 hotels. The list is almost endless.

Everything within Disney World is served by a fully accessible transport system, free to all guests. All buses have wheelchair lifts big enough for power wheelchairs and three- or four-wheel scooters.

Almost all of the ferries on the lakes and canals have level docking and they can also load wheelchairs and scooters with a short ramp. The monorails between Epcot and the Magic Kingdom are also accessible and everything is flat and level. Of the few flights of steps that exist, all have a ramped alternative.

Over and above this, all doors are level access and are wide enough for chairs. You are almost always within sight of a toilet, and there is always at least one disabled cubicle.

It is this accessibility that keeps me coming back to Disney year after year.

I use a power wheelchair to get around and live in a part of London poorly served by accessible cabs and buses. Other than going down to the local shops, getting out and about is a real effort for me.

Then, once a year, I go to Disney and everything changes. I'm free! I can go anywhere I want, when I want and on my own. My wife can sit by the pool all day while I go and visit a park, or just enjoy the sun and the fresh air on my face as I ride along.

The high level of access doesn't end in the parks. We always stay in one of the resort hotels; on our most recent trip we stayed in the Animal Kingdom Lodge, Disney's newest hotel.

It is great fun, designed to look like an African Savannah Lodge complete with a (fake) grass roof. Its huge lobby is filled with African Art and it looks out onto a Savannah filled with animals.

Every Disney hotel has an ample proportion of disabled access rooms with roll-in showers, and while room sizes vary from hotel to hotel, one room we're frequently given is so big that I can drive figure-eights with my scooter.

The housekeeping staff have always been wonderful. They brought me a board to stiffen my mattress and a raised toilet seat immediately after I requested them on the last visit. Don't be too afraid, or too embarrassed, to ask for help.

'I can go anywhere I want, when I want and on my own. My wife can sit by the pool all day while I go and visit a park, or just enjoy the sun and the fresh air on my face as I ride along.'

If all this sounds good, the better news is that it's set to become even more accessible in the coming years.

Disney has been working hard designing new rides. It is also refurbishing older ones to ensure that when you can't actually ride in your chair, it is reasonably easy to make a sliding transfer to the ride car.

Even the swimming pools are becoming accessible, with new pools built with level access. Special wheelchairs that you can ride into the water are available to those that need them.

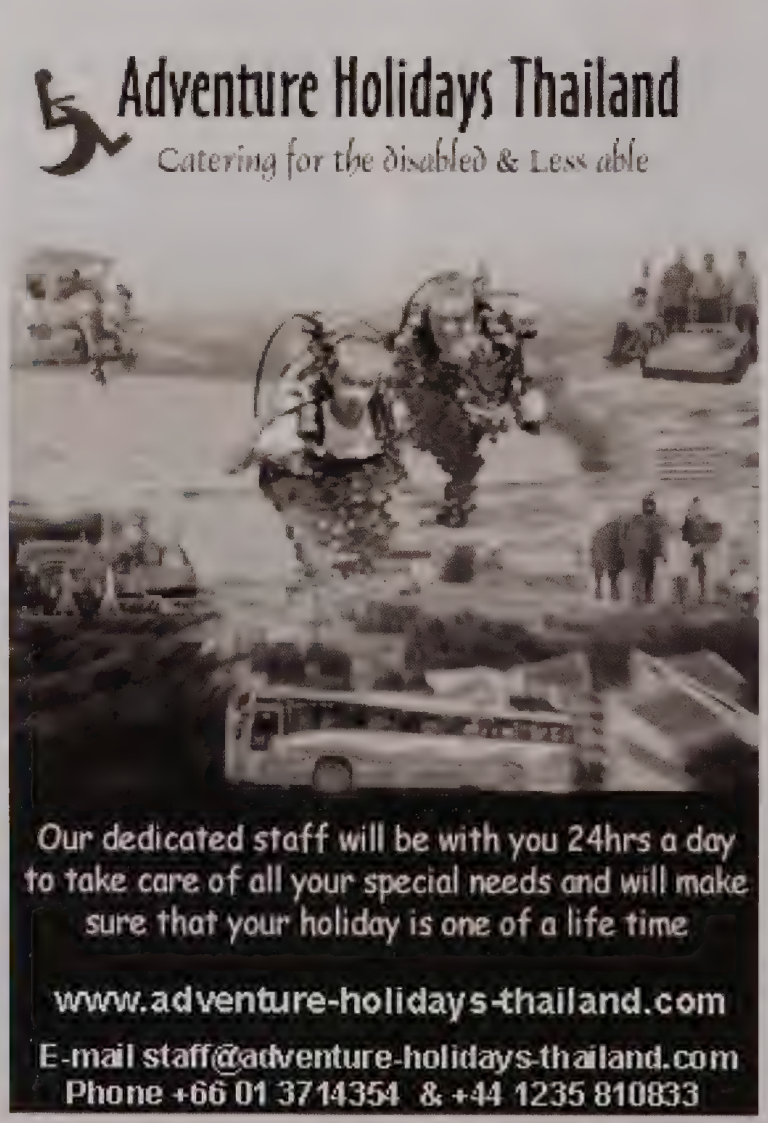
People with other disabilities have not been forgotten. Braille and audio-tape guides are available at most attractions, and guests with limited vision are often allowed to ride twice in succession to better appreciate the attraction.

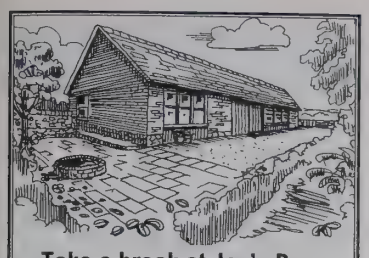
There are headsets available at some attractions that receive infrared signals from overhead to provide amplified sound. Some attractions have monitors with subtitles. There are also signed performances throughout the week.

Overall, we had an excellent trip. Having been there so frequently, we no longer feel we have to see and do everything. When you are there for three weeks, there's always tomorrow, so you can take time out to sit by the pool, or just go and visit another hotel you may want to stay at in the following year.

And if you miss something, there's always next year.

Return flights start at £300. Hotel prices start from £55 a room per night off-season. More info: www.wdwig.com, www.wdwinfo.com Official web site: www.disneyworld.com Reservations: 001 407 934 7639.





Take a break at Jay's Barn

Jay's Barn (sleeps 4) has been specifically designed & rebuilt for disabled people. Beautifully situated in its own grounds/garden. Easy access to Alton Towers, Peak District, The Potteries, or enjoy a visit to one of the level routes in the locality. Book now for July onwards.

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Films

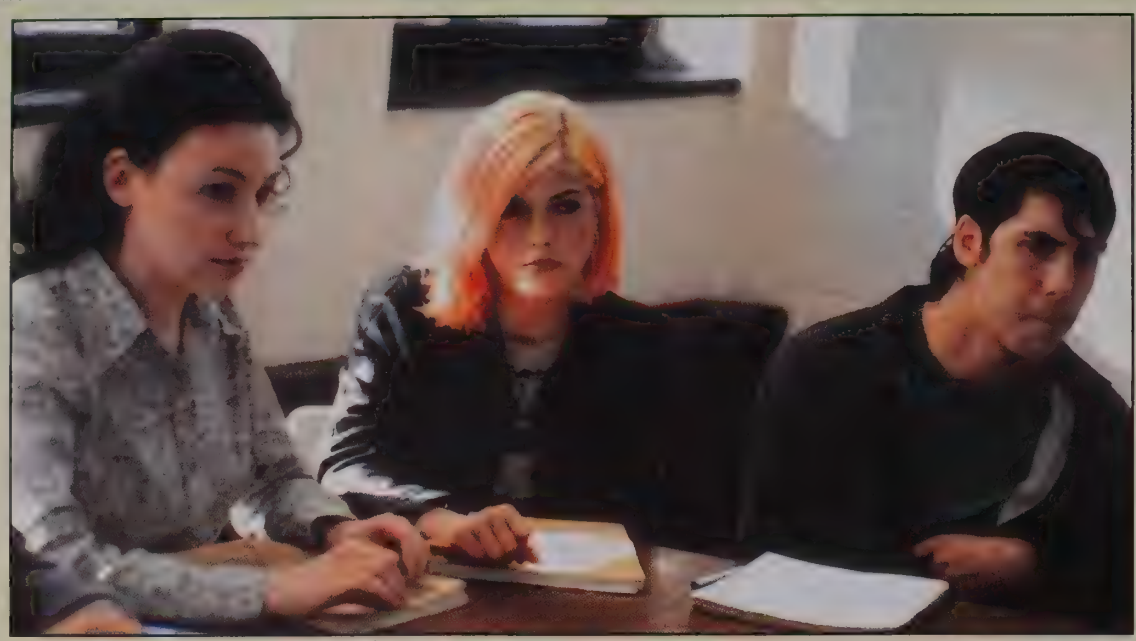
Storytelling 👍👍
La Strada 👍👍👍👍

Many of *DN*'s male readers may want to see the opening minute of Todd Solondz's dark comedy *Storytelling*, in which Marcus, a young man with cp (played by Leo Fitzpatrick), has sex with Vi, a fellow student in his creative writing class (Selma Blair). Later, in class, Marcus reads his (evidently autobiographical) story. It provokes silence, then the comment: "It kind of reminded me of Faulkner... but East coast and disabled", and a series of "supportive" comments about great writers and their disabilities ("Updike had psoriasis...").

The film then moves on; Solondz is not really interested in Marcus. Vi has bad sex with the class's black tutor, returns to Marcus and subsequently describes the experience in a thinly-veiled story, only to be accused of racism by her classmates.

This section is titled Fiction. The second, where a talentless documentary-maker invades a suburban family is called Non-fiction, the ironic point being that the former is about truth-telling, the second about creating falsehoods.

But as Solondz is in the storytelling business himself, my feeling was that he should quit whining and get on with the job.



Post-happiness: Vi (*centre*) and Marcus (*right*) try their hands at creative composition in *Storytelling*

Fellini's 1954 road movie *La Strada*, now released by the BFI in a brand new subtitled print, has been described by the director as "the story of a man who discovers his neighbour".

Zampano (Anthony Quinn), a brutish travelling strong man, needing a new assistant, pays a peasant for her daughter Gelsomina (Giulietta Masina). Gelsomina is described as "a bit strange" and "different from others".

Gelsomina looks to Zampano for human contact, but gets only taciturnity. He trains her like a performing animal, by beating her. He leaves her by the roadside while he goes off drinking and womanising. Then the two of them join a circus, and Gelsomina finds a friend, Il Matto – The Fool – a clowning tightrope walker.

But Zampano and Il Matto have a longstanding dispute. When the two of them fight, and Zampano accidentally kills Il Matto, Gelsomina loses her sanity. Years later, Zampano discovers that she has died and goes to pieces.

This could have been abominably mawkish. Remarkably, it isn't. Fellini tells a simple, lyrical story, a kind of neo-realist fairy tale, and creates pathos without ever slipping into sentimentality.

I'm sceptical about Gelsomina's rather vaguely defined condition, and the film comes marginally too close for comfort to the Hollywood model where the disabled person exists to help the white male hero find himself.

But the key point is that Fellini cares about his characters, even including the boorish Zampano, and therefore makes us care what happens to them. And that's what's lacking in *Storytelling*.

***DN*'s new film reviewer, Allan Sutherland, studied film and television at Middlesex Polytechnic before reviewing for *Sight and Sound* and *Time Out*. He is also known as an author, a radio and TV scriptwriter, stand-up comic and performance poet. Thanks to Allan's predecessor, Simon Minty, for his perceptive reviews.**

TV

I could never imagine anyone improving on David Jansen's 1960s portrayal as *The Fugitive* but then along came Harrison Ford in the film version.

Now C4 is showing an updated version at 6pm on Fridays. Our 21st century hero even has a website richardkimble.com; but where is that elusive one armed man?

C5's *Britain's War Heroes* featured Douglas Bader, the RAF pilot who lost both his legs then went on to fight in the Battle of Britain (and made everyone else feel inadequate).

Back on C4, Svetlana was literally hopping mad when her top-of-the-range prosthesis was stolen in *The Sopranos*. The leg was later retrieved from vindictive Janice by a couple of Russian heavies. As Tony Soprano said: "Don't mess with these people".

Watching *Children in Need* (BBC1) I seriously considered pledging plastic to stop the former Blue Peter presenters from singing. Don't give up the day jobs guys.

I haven't watched *Brookside* (C4) for ages, but caught Jimmy Corkhill delivering an extremely moving speech about the difficulties endured by people with mental health problems (as Jimmy put it) "in stigma world". Jimmy's character has been through a lot, even for Soapland, but this social comment was spot on.

At last Fern Britton is back on *This Morning* (ITV1) but have you seen their Dating Club? Carol (a powerchair user) was encouraged to chat up the supermarket shelf-filler in her quest for Mr Right. But don't try this at *your* local supermarket – you never know, he could be a mad axe man.

BBC1's *4 x 4* series highlighted NHS scare stories including an undercover report about dirty hospitals. It was more like a crash course on the best ways to spread infection. No wonder people choose to go abroad. Now please wash your hands.

Jane Shepherd

👍👍👍👍 excellent
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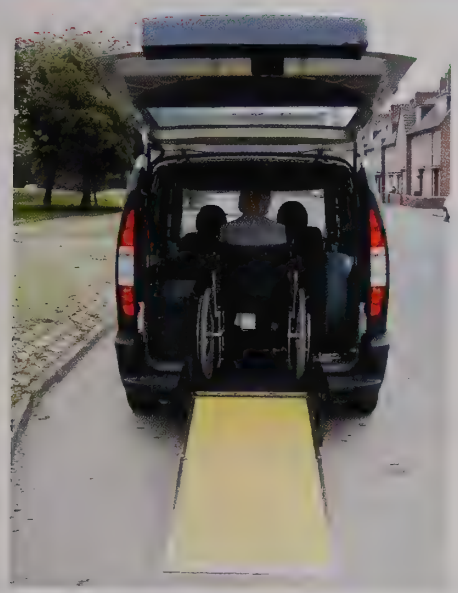

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You are what you eat

Besides making a New Year's resolution to eat your greens and avoid fatty foods, remember that some foods and supplements can help various conditions. Nutritional adviser Sharon Flynn investigates

Good nutrition is the foundation of good health. Nothing impacts more on the wellbeing of our body, both positively and negatively, than what we choose to feed it.

We expect our bodies to perform well under an enormous amount of physical and mental stress.

To maintain good health we need to ensure a supply of around forty different nutrients. Eating a wide variety of foods increases our chances of achieving this and experts recommend consuming at least five portions of fruit and vegetables per day.

The relationship between good nutrition and a healthy heart has been known for years.

Among key nutrients needed to support a healthy heart is vitamin E. Taken regularly, it can significantly reduce the risk of developing heart disease. It may also slow the progression of heart disease.

Too much saturated fat in the diet contributes to the risk of heart disease by causing hardening of the arteries. Not all fats are bad and increasing intake of essential fatty acids is recommended, particularly of Omega 3 fatty acids EPA and DHA, both found in fish such as salmon and mackarel.

Three other nutrients needed for a healthy heart are folic acid and vitamins B6 and B12. These help to lower levels of homocysteine in the body. Although this occurs naturally, elevated levels have been associated as a contributory factor to the development of atherosclerosis.

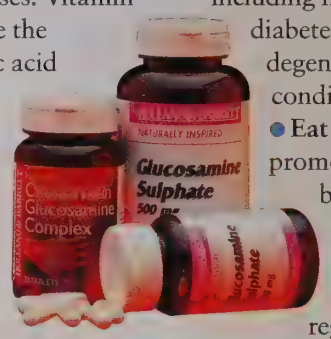
Joint problems, including arthritis, can also be improved through proper nutrition.

Being overweight puts extra strain on the joints so try to stay within a healthy weight range. Excessive intakes of saturated fats like red fatty meats and dairy products can aggravate arthritis. A vegetarian diet can be beneficial as it is naturally lower in saturated fats.

A low fat diet may be especially helpful for rheumatoid arthritis or those with gout. Keeping sugar and salt to a minimum is also recommended.

Older people may find their appetite reduces as they age, which increases the chances of nutritional deficiencies and the susceptibility to degenerative disease. A good multivitamin and mineral formula will help to safeguard against any shortfall in the diet.

Antioxidant vitamins A, C and E, zinc and selenium are key to protecting and slowing the development of degenerative diseases. Vitamin C helps to increase the elimination of uric acid while vitamin E helps counteract the inflammatory process.



Glucosamine sulphate, the raw material used by the body to build and repair cartilage, is vital to maintaining a good condition.

It is used to build new cartilage and to slow the progression of disease.

The cartilage has no blood supply of its own and relies on the fluid surrounding the joints for nourishment and lubrication. Without this vital lubrication, it would become malnourished and fragile, leading to possible joint damage and impairment of movement.

Essential fatty acids (EFAs) found in fish oils and flax seeds are important to moderate the body's inflammatory response. By taking EFAs, swelling and pain is greatly reduced.

Sharon Flynn is a nutritional adviser at Holland & Barrett.

Healthy eating tips

- **Don't over eat** – Consuming more calories than your body can use will result in weight gain as the extra calories are stored as fat. Obesity carries with it an increased risk of disease including heart disease, diabetes and other degenerative conditions.
- **Eat more fibre** – Fibre promotes a balanced blood sugar level, reduces cholesterol and encourages regular bowel movements to ensure toxins are eliminated properly.
- **Watch the sugar** – Sugars provide us with energy but contribute little to the diet except "empty" calories.
- **Keep salt low** – Excessive levels of sodium in the diet may lead to a rise in blood pressure. Avoid salt in processed foods.
- **Get your fats right** – Fat is an essential part of any overall diet plan although high levels of fat in the diet can contribute to health problems. Ensure a good supply of polyunsaturated fats and essential fatty acids found in vegetable oils, seeds and fish.

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Adam Reynolds has muscular dystrophy.

Because of his condition, he was placed on a strict diet that entailed eating mostly raw food and no meat, eggs or fish, at the age of two.

At the age of eight, after changing doctors, he changed to a much less restrictive diet, but still avoided meat, fish and eggs because they are rich in protein.

He began to eat foods such as wholegrain cooked rice and bread. The aim was to maximise his general health, but also to help his specific condition.

"The doctor felt that the way the genetic quirk impacted was going to be helped greatly by restricting protein," he says.

His typical diet still involves baked potatoes, but also a lot of Mediterranean foods including spaghetti Napoli, couscous and risotto.

He says: "I have always thought it was fairly extraordinary that conventional medical practice regards drugs as being extremely important and anything else you eat as being practically irrelevant."

Patricia Pique, who has rheumatoid arthritis, started her diet after consulting an alternative medicine clinic, because her doctor had been "very unhelpful" and had left her "out on a limb".

She is very clear that what works for her might not help other people, but she says her anti-inflammatory diet has eased the symptoms of the condition, which causes joints to swell up.

"If I do eat things that are wrong, my knuckles go red within about half an hour."

Mrs Pique, aged 67, from Surrey, said: "As far as possible I eat organic food. I cut out alcohol and caffeine and dairy produce. Citric acid really does me in and all red meats."

She does eat fish and white meat, though.

"Nothing cures the arthritis, but it does relieve the inflammatory condition.

"I have kept to the diet for about 14 years and I still stick to it very carefully, even though I am now having quite strong medication.

"It is not cheap and anybody on the bread line could not do it because of the extra vitamins and the trips to the alternative therapists, but it has been worth it to me."

Bright ideas

Whether it has to do with keeping cool in the office, or finding clothes that fit, Dan Batten has ideas to suit everyone

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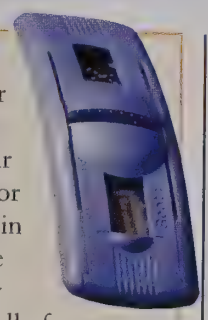

Are you forever losing the end of your cellotape reel or tying yourself in knots with the dreaded sticky stuff? Use a roll of new Scotch Satin Tape with a hand dispenser, and wasted rolls will become a thing of the past. Simply put your dispenser on the front of your hand and pull out a 5cm long strip of tape, and it will immediately be replaced by another strip. A dispenser with mountable bracket and one refill costs £1.99 from good stationery shops, and Sainsbury, Asda and Tesco.

If you need clothes that are bigger than those available on the high street, give the people at Big Tee Shirt a call. They have a wide range available, including shirts, v-neck sweatshirt, t-shirts and boxer shorts, as well as track suits and trousers. *Tel: 0115 989 0568 or visit www.bigteeshirt.co.uk*

Do you feel invisible to traffic when you're out in your wheelchair or scooter? Reader Pat Lindsay from St Ives has found a Grippaglow armband which her partner uses on his travels. The armband is covered in a reflective, luminous material with a string of high intensity flashing red lights that can be seen up to 1,000 metres away, and is powered by two button cell batteries. *Available from Ecoflow, tel: 01752 841144, www.ecoflow.ltd.uk*

Heard of any gadgets, devices or equipment that others could find helpful? Send your ideas to Dan Batten at *DN*, tel: 020 7619 7323, e-mail: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

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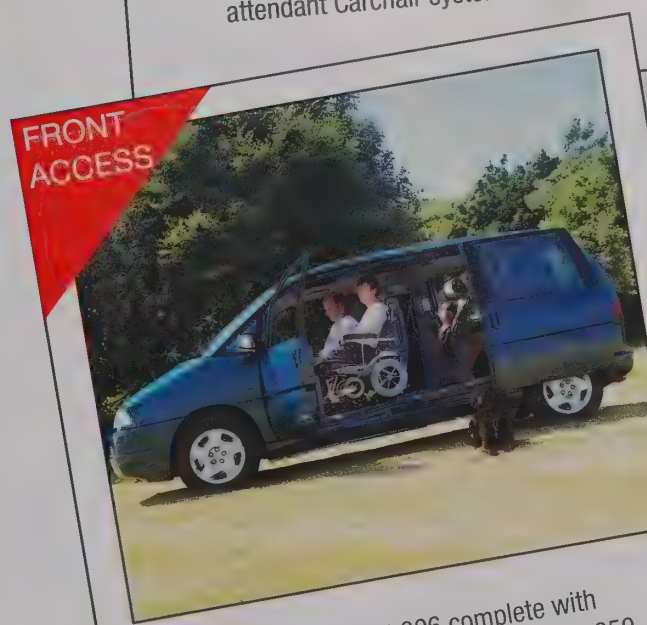

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ILLUSTRATION BY CLARE CURTIS

Dear Ann

- love and loneliness
- bereavement
- personal problems
- advice and support

Ann Darnbrough, who is disabled herself, is co-author of the *Directory for Disabled People* and other guides. Write to her at *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or e-mail your problem to editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

She-devil on wheels

I may not be much good at walking. In fact, I can hardly walk from the living room to the kitchen. But I love driving. I am 86 and have been driving since 1961 with my car always having to be adjusted because I only have the use of my left foot. I was born with club feet and had 13 operations as a child.

But when I get in the car, I'm relaxed and could drive to Scotland and back – no effort.

Nancy, Hemel Hempstead

Congratulations! How many readers can beat that?

Coping with loss

I feel so distraught. My husband died in a climbing accident last July. Facing a new year without him is tearing me apart. He was not only my carer, but also my best friend. I don't know how I can go on. How have other readers coped?

Margaret (e-mail)

Death has been described as the "end of a conversation." And this describes very well the feeling of being cut off when someone close dies. You will always have these feelings, but they will become easier to live with as time goes by. It can easily take at least a year to begin to recover from a close bereavement, as there is all the pain the first anniversaries without your husband may bring – birthday, wedding anniversary, and so on.

I hope you have the support of family and friends at this time. But it is important to resist any pressure put on you as to the "correct way to grieve." You need to resist any suggestions of "pulling yourself together" or the opposite "let it all out – you should be crying more." It is sometimes easier to talk to a friendly stranger. Cruse is very helpful, as is the London Bereavement Network or, of course, the Samaritans.

Believe me, you will reach a time when you can look back without the extreme pain, and remember the good times and intimacies you enjoyed together. The memory of your husband's companionship will always be there for you.

Show me the way

Living in a small town as a registered blind person, I have problems reaching the out-of-town shopping development. Can you advise me on what to do?

Robert, Wigan

I suggest you contact your local council to see if they offer transport concessions for registered blind people and other disabled people. Schemes vary: some areas issue bus tokens to use for the cost of local taxi journeys.

Other councils have schemes where you can apply for a book of vouchers that you can use to obtain discounts on local taxi journeys, or they may issue you a taxi card for the same purpose.

Between two worlds

I am head-over-heels in love. You may say that this is wonderful, and it is, but we have different religions. I am Roman Catholic and he is Muslim. I am also disabled which makes an extra hurdle to overcome with his family. In fact, both out families are pretty much against the relationship continuing and certainly against our marrying.

He is the man of my dreams and I cannot bear the idea of parting from him. I'd regret such a decision for the rest of my life. What am I going to do?

Sheila, Nottingham

It may be encouraging to know that if you do decide to proceed with your relationship, you will be joining a huge band of people entering into mixed marriages in this country.

Left alone, your love for each other would no doubt see you through. However, the real problem is your families. Can you try to win them round? If this is not possible, can either of you face life without them? This is a very tough decision.

Remember, it's not just religious difference that mixed-faith couples have to face. Everybody has to face lifestyle issues as well. For instance, are you an owl or a lark (bed late, or bed early)? A vegetarian or a meat eater? Can you agree on watching at least some of the same TV programmes? Do you feel the need to clean the house every day or are you fine with letting the dust gather, and so on? Add on the difficulties of different religious practices, and the pot can boil over.

You also have to consider where you will marry and, above all, how you will raise any children. Both of your faiths can be strong and demanding about this.

If you go ahead, you'll need to talk things through all the time to make sure misunderstandings are caught before they cause trouble. It's important that you both compromise and meet in the middle, rather than one of you being dominant.

True love can win through and you will be adding to a more tolerant, mulitcultural society.

Bad housekeeping

A while ago I lived in sheltered accommodation. It was such a bad experience, it made me ill. I need to hear from people who lived in places on a hill, or with rent that was too high or, most importantly, if they were left alone, or felt ill-treated in any way.

I'm trying to form a campaign and I would like to hear from others for support. I am having severe problems coping with my experiences.

Joy, Bristol

People need more than shelter. I'm happy to pass on information from readers who have had similar problems.

Cruse tel: 020 8940 4818; **Scottish Cruse** tel: 01738 444178

London Bereavement Network tel: 020 7700 8134

Samaritans, national tel: 08457 909090 (you will be put through to your local Samaritans)

Help at the end of the phone

DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick gives disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, with a post-graduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss in confidence, talk to her on Mondays 6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882111.

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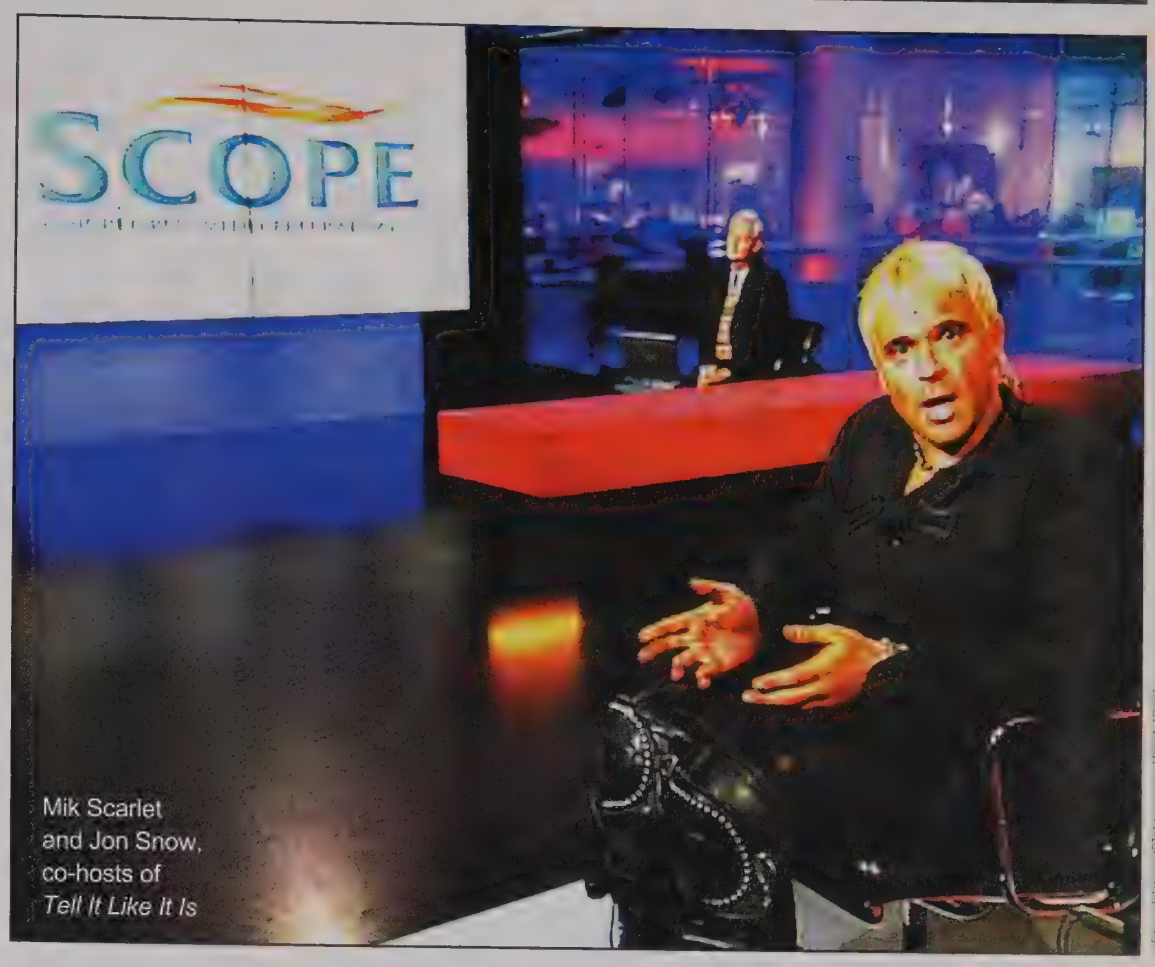
Tell it like it is

Questioning people's perceptions and challenging the media's portrayal of disabled people.



Mik Scarlet and Jon Snow, co-hosts of *Tell It Like It Is*

A report commissioned by Scope in 2000 discovered that many of the UK's 8.6 million disabled people feel that the press still does not reflect the reality of their lives. Stop Press showed that many print journalists still use stereotypes when portraying disabled people, both in pictures and words. A total of 800 derogatory terms were found out of a sample of 1,000 cuttings. Scope believes this kind of portrayal can undermine disabled people's standing in society, excusing and underpinning the negative assumptions that can lead to discrimination.

Tell It Like It Is is a new film and training package that challenges media professionals to reflect upon their choice of language and imagery when portraying disabled people and their lives.

Liz Daone, Head of Campaigns at Scope, says: "It's all about challenging people's perceptions of disabled people and encouraging positive and accurate use of language and imagery within the media. This is not about political correctness; this is about people's lives. How a group of people is seen by society has an effect on all parts of their lives: schools, jobs and social life."

The launch of the multi-media pack spearheads Scope's drive aimed at broadcast, print, web, advertising, pr and marketing professionals. The project's development was funded through the Government's See the Person Campaign and aims to raise the issue with students as well as established journalists and other professionals.

The video is co-hosted by Channel 4 News anchor Jon Snow and TV presenter Mik Scarlet and features disabled people talking about their experiences with the media and the way that they are treated by society.

The launch

The campaign was launched on 6 November, when journalists and editors from print, broadcast and new media gathered with key supporters of the campaign as well as representatives of key industry bodies such as The Independent TV Commission, The Commercial Radio Companies Association (CRCA) and The Society of Editors.

PATRICK HARRISON

Minister for Disabled People Maria Eagle (above) commented, "Many people don't realise that one in four households in the UK include a disabled person. It would benefit us all to be more aware of this. The media has a direct route into almost all these households. I hope that they will use this package to inform and inspire their approach to disabled people and the way that they represent them."

Kit Wells, Chair of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Disabled Member's Council and writer on disability over the years, said: "It is lazy and incompetent practice to use 'wheelchair-bound' in relation to a person who happens to use a wheelchair, but a day does not pass where you do not read that phrase or hear it on the radio or TV.

"It is vital that disability awareness and disability equality training take place in every workplace. What is equally vital is that the training is not delivered in isolation, that it is made appropriate to everyday situations and that it is delivered by disabled trainers."

Building on success

Key people within the media have backed the campaign to challenge the way that the media portrays disabled people.

BBC Arts & Media Correspondent Nick Higham describes the film as:

"...a very useful introduction to the whole subject and a guide to the obvious pitfalls made from the perspective (which we don't see nearly often enough) of disabled people themselves."

The Times Social Affairs Correspondent, Alexandra Frean, comments:

"This helps dispel some of the misconceptions about disability... and provides some practical pointers on how reporters can overcome their prejudices and ignorance."

Following the launch, Scope is now looking to work with key industry bodies such as the Institute of Public Relations, National Union of Journalists, The Newspaper Society, Commercial Radio Companies Association, Broadcasters Disability Network and the Department for Work and Pensions. The first classroom session for *Tell It Like It Is* has also been delivered to 30 journalism undergraduates at the Surrey Institute of Art & Design.

For more information on the campaign contact: Scope's press office on 020 7619 7200.

PATRICK HARRISON

Danny Crates: changing people's perceptions

Danny Crates is a Paralympic athlete, European champion sprinter and a key speaker and advocate of the campaign. Having won a bronze medal at the 2000 Paralympics, Danny has given numerous press interviews and experienced first hand how the media treat disabled people and their lives.

Danny is proud of his achievements yet feels the media still fall into the habit of stereotyping, rather than portraying the reality of disabled people's lives: "Words that are used like 'tragic', 'courage', 'brave', that are often put to people like myself when we often get up to something. Do you think things should still be like that?

He continues: "If I tell you that since my accident I play rugby. I've played rugby with one arm for a few years. I've worked as a scuba diver – I worked in Australia for nearly a year as a teacher. I'm a full-time athlete and I train six times a week, three to four hours a day.

"But does that make me brave? Or does that just make me normal?"

Danny's words clearly represent the core of the campaign: a desire to be treated like everybody else. His experience with the media shows how important it is for *Tell It Like It Is* to challenge perceptions of disabled people and to provide an ethical framework for all communications professionals to follow.

How to find out more

To learn more about *Tell It Like It Is* visit: www.scope.org.uk/tellitlikeitis
***Tell It Like It Is* costs £85.10 excluding VAT. The package includes:**

1. a VHS video (running time 12 minutes)
2. a discussion guide (40 pages of background information and practical exercises to help get to grips with the issues raised)
3. a CD-ROM (Mac and PC compatible - this contains versions of the discussion guide in Adobe Acrobat PDF and Microsoft Word formats, a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation and the entire video in mpeg format)
4. one copy of *Stop Press* or *Left Out*
5. copies of *Talking About Disabled People*, the handy guide to more positive language

To order a copy, call 020 7619 7341 or send a cheque payable to Scope at *Tell It Like It Is*, Scope, 6 Market Road, London, N7 9PW.

The year 2001 had its share of memorable events, good and bad. See how many you can recall with *DN*'s first crossword of the new year.

ACROSS

1. Problem which blighted the British countryside throughout 2001 (4,3,5,7)
8. **And 32 Across.** Jeffrey Archer's co-accused in their Old Bailey trial (3,7)
10. Labour politician who succeeded Robin Cook as Foreign Secretary (5)
11. Britain's gold medal winner at the World Athletics Championship (7)
13. The FA Cup Final was held in this city in 2001 (7)
15. **And 18 Across.** She outraged the Welsh people by saying on television, "What are they for? They are always so pleased with themselves." (4,8)
16. Former Prime Minister who left Parliament at the 2001 General Election (5)
17. FBI agent Robert Hanssen was revealed as one in the pay of the Kremlin (3)
18. **See 15 Across**
20. **And 1 Down.** *Popstars* contestant who won his way into the group *Hear'Say* (5,6)
21. Leading country in the war against terrorism (3)
23. He co-starred with Sarah Lancashire in *The Glass* (4)
26. City whose World Trade Center was destroyed on September 11th, 2001 (3,4)
27. US comedy movie, whose sequel was a hit in 2001 (8,3)
28. **And 30 Down.** Computer-generated star of the movie *Final Fantasy* (3,4)
29. '____ And Simple', the debut hit single by *Hear'Say* (4)
31. Ken Stott played Inspector Chappel in a new series of 'The ____' (4)
32. **See 8 Across**
34. **And 44 Across.** Prince William arrived at this university in September (2,7)
35. **See 28 Down**
37. The gloves he used in his 1963 fight against Henry Cooper went for £37,000 at auction (3)
38. England's hat-trick hero in the 5-1 victory over Germany (4)
40. Tories' position in the General Election (6)
44. **See 34 Across**
45. Madrid club who paid Juventus £48 million for Zinedine Zidane (4)
46. Foster escaped from Banham zoo for seven days in June – what kind of bird was he? (7)

DOWN

1. **See 20 Across**
2. At the 73rd Academy Awards, Steven Soderbergh won the Oscar for Best Director for this film (7)
3. She wore a kilt at the start of her highly-priced world tour (7)
4. City in which Juventus controversially beat Celtic 3-2 in the Champions League (5)
5. **See 25 Down**
6. One of the first candidates to be knocked out of the Tory leadership contest (6)
7. Britain's Ellen MacArthur became the youngest person to circumnavigate it (5)
8. The ethics of separating Siamese ones in Britain provoked continuing controversy (5)
9. Keith, the third-placed contestant in the celebrity version of *Big Brother* (5)
12. Claire, the soap star who was voted "Rear of the Year" (7)
14. Pop star who released her autobiography *Learning To Fly* (4,5)
19. Industrial English city which suffered race riots in May (6)
20. American who was the first fee-paying tourist in space (6,4)
22. Film star who divorced his wife Nicole Kidman (6)
24. Spinner who bamboozled England in the Ashes series (5)
25. **And 5 Down.** William Hague's successor (6,5)
28. **And 35 Across.** Oil worker who returned to Scotland after being held hostage in Colombia for 23 months (8,6)
29. Politician who was dubbed "Two Jabs" in May (8)
30. **See 28 Across**
33. Interest ____ dropped several times during 2001 (5)
36. Chris Evans was sacked from his job in this medium (5)
39. Mountainous country whose royal family was slaughtered in June (5)
41. Kylie Minogue has a _____ role in the hit movie *Moulin Rouge* (5)
42. Royal prince, whose film company was heavily criticized in September (6)
43. Williams sister who won Wimbledon again (5)

CROSSWORD BY JIM MCLAREN
ILLUSTRATION BY VALERIE BARR
ANSWERS ON PAGE 38

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Do you want to go away but don't fancy making countless calls to find help? Dan Batten comes to the rescue with some useful tips

If you're visiting London and want to take in some of its history, let yourself be led by an expert guide from LONDON WALKS. Among the tours on offer are a wander around the streets occupied by the infamous Jack the Ripper, the parts of London Shakespeare inhabited and a Beatles tour, including the chance to use the zebra crossing made famous by the fab four on the cover of their album *Abbey Road*. If walking isn't for you, there's also a chance to take a tour on wheels, guided by the ultimate fountain of knowledge, a black cab driver. Tel: 020 7624 3978 or *visit www.walks.com*

A quick trip to MICK BENFORD'S WEBSITE should help. Mick offers help with getting cut price last minute holidays, cruises and package holidays, all suitable for disabled travellers. Mick can also assist with flight, car hire and that dreaded holiday insurance, and can also book you into his own adapted holiday apartment, Hacienda-el-Miguel. Visit *www.mickbenford.virtualtravelagency.net* Tel: 01536 523591, or *www.holiben.co.uk* for details of the Hacienda-el-Miguel.

The DISABLED CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP have a selection of trips within the UK and abroad for those who want to have a holiday and celebrate their Christian faith at the same time. Destinations for 2002 include Torquay, Ullenwood Manor near Cheltenham and Israel. The fellowship is also looking for people to act as personal assistants on their trips. Contact Jenny Edwards, Tel: 01372 737046.

DO YOU HAVE ANY HOLIDAY TIPS YOU WANT TO SHARE? SEND THEM TO *DN* AT THE ADDRESS ON PAGE 2, OR EMAIL: *editor@disabilitynow.org.uk*

If you need a companion to help you out on your travels, get in touch with ABILITY 2 TRAVEL. They have details of experienced carers and nurses who will travel either inland or abroad, including one who is fluent in five European languages and has a degree in business studies. Ability 2 Travel can also help with journey preparations and will inspect all hotel and leisure facilities to make sure they are fully accessible. Tel: 01536 501298 or *www.ability2travel.com*

If you want to go on holiday without your usual circle of friends but need assistance, a holiday organised by ASSISTANCE TRAVEL SERVICE (ATS) could be for you. They can organise trips to anywhere in the world and offer holiday packages complete with insurance as well as escorted tours tailored to suit you, including a door to door service. Tel: 01708 863193 or e-mail: *atstravel@aol.com*

If you're going on your travels in the UK or the USA and use a wheelchair, check out a SMOOTH RIDE GUIDE. The books offer advice on where to find accessible transport and accommodation, as well as highlighting the pick of accessible sports and leisure facilities and places of historic interest. The UK and USA edition costs £9.95 and £5 respectively including p&p. Tel: 01279 777966 or *www.smoothrideguides.com*

The 3H FUND organises subsidised group holidays both in the UK and abroad for young people with physical and learning disabilities with the support of volunteer helpers. The fund also offers grants for families of disabled people with low incomes to organise their own holiday in the UK. Tel: 01892 547474 or website: *www.3hfund.org.uk*

Another great source of advice is TRIPSCOPE. They can advise on local, long distance or international trips either for individuals or larger groups, and can offer advice on assistance at any stage of your journey, as well as on car, wheelchair and scooter hire, insurance and accessible toilets. Tel: 08457 585641 or e-mail: *tripscope@cableinet.co.uk*

If a trip to Tenerife is imminent and you don't want to carry your equipment with you, try hiring it from LERO. They offer a wide range of aids including oxygen bottles, electric beds, wheelchairs and toileting aids, as well as medical assistance and also sell supplies and appliances. Tel: 00 34 922 750289 or *www.lero.net*

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If someone in your family has a learning disability ('mental handicap'), he or she needs security – not just now, but in the future when you're no longer here. Mencap, the UK's leading charity for people with learning disabilities, is offering a FREE booklet called *Leaving money by will to people with a learning disability*. The booklet explains how you can secure your dependant's future and how to avoid pitfalls such as unintentionally reducing their entitlement to benefits.

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VOLVO 480 COUPE, auto, 1990 H reg. Accelerator/brake hand controls. Driver's electric seat with adjustable height. One owner, 37k miles. MOT expires Sept 02. Good condition. £1,000 ono. Tel: 01948 863233.

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ESCORT AUTO 1.6 1996 very low miles, hand controls. Good condition. 10 months MOT. £3,000 ovno. Tel: 01484 462266.

FIAT FIORINO 1.3, K reg, 24,500 miles, MOT 11/02, Tax 05/02, winch, ramp, 3 seats. £2,000 ono. Tel: 01249 812736 (Wilts).

RENAULT ESPACE (ELIZE) 2.0 N reg, 7 seats, auto, air conditioned, twin sunroof, 80k miles. Fitted with Milford Electric Person Lift to front passenger seat. £7,950. Tel: 01494 717700.

CHAIRMAN ESCORT 1.6 J reg, 48k miles, fsh. Five people including driver and wheelchair. Ramps, clamps, power steering, stereo. Good condition, price £3,500. Tel: 01223 563348.

FORD MONDEO 2.0 LX, auto, P reg 1997, hand controls. 44k miles, driver's air bag, power adjustable steering. 5 door hatch back, immobiliser, in A1 condition. Just had MOT. Full service history, belladonna colour, air conditioned, sunroof. £4,900 ono. Tel: 01727 822071 (St Albans).

CITROEN BERLINGO MULTISPACE 18l, V reg, 5k miles, Brotherwood conversion. Rear ramp, pas, a/c, remote controlled central locking, electric windows. As new. £11,500. Tel: 01202 290155.

• Combined

FIAT FIORINO 1.3CC, G reg, 66k miles, MOT 05/02, tax 04/02. Fold-down ramp, clamps and seatbelt, large side windows, 4 seats + wheelchair. 2 owners, conversion and service details. £1,950. Easibathe walk-in bath with height extension seat and air system, fittings inc. Vgc, £650. Tel: 01322 342972 (Erith, Kent).

• Wheelchairs/scooters

LARK 4 SCOOTER, vgc, little used in last 2 years. Lights, indicators, charger and shopping basket included. £1,200. Tel; 01980 620470.

SHOPRIDER SOVEREIGN 4 wheeler, model TE 888N. Purchased July '96 but hardly ever used. Excellent condition. Charger incl. £950 ono. Tel: 01580 762030.

SHOPRIDER SCOOTER WITH charger, one year old on 2 October. Immaculate condition, little used because of use of a second motorised wheelchair. Red in colour and costs £2,400, I will accept £1,400 ono. Tel: 020 8801 6858 or email: nwamuo@ukonline.co.uk

CRUISER 4E ELECTRIC wheelchair, excellent condition. Never been used, recently serviced. £1,000 ono. Tel June: 020 8808 8560 (evenings).

SUNGIFT "MOVING PEOPLE METRO" scooter, 48 ins long and 25 ins wide, 4 wheels, 5 mph, shopping basket. As new, cost new £1,700 May 2001. Price £850. View Bedford/Milton Keynes area. Tel: 01234 720166.

STERLING 4 WHEEL scooter. Hardly used, £500 ono. Tel: 02920 702857.

QUICKIE CHILDREN'S WHEELCHAIR. Excellent condition. Lightweight, wheels remove for compact storage. £275 ono. Tel: 01926 813145.

"REA COMFORT" MANUAL wheelchair (Scandinavian). Recline and tilt mechanism, blue, upholstered. High quality and excellent condition. £490. Tel: 01242 674866.

ELAP ROTATING SEAT fit Zafira, £250 ono. Portable ramps and wheelchair tie down, £150 ono. Tel: 01691 653954.

MAYAN XL 4 wheel electric scooter 15 months old. Never used. Cost £5,370, sell £2,000. Tel: 01729 822441 (North Yorkshire).

RASCAL 245 MOBILITY scooter, 48 ins long and 25 ins wide, 3 wheels, 4 mph, shopping basket. As new, serviced August 2001. Cost £2,000 new May 2000, price £900. View Bedford/Milton Keynes area. Tel: 01234 720166.

ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR, BRAND new, never been used. £700. Tel: 07980 837994 (Dulwich, London SE22).

• Trikes/Bikes

SAXON XL FOUR wheel mobility bike with basket and battery charger. In perfect condition, 4 years old and hardly used. £800. Tel Irene Koluzs at home: 01932 850060 (after 12 noon).

• Accommodation

VERY SPACIOUS DETACHED bungalow, all on one level. Full width doors perfect for wheelchair access, level paths and patios, secluded gardens, in plot of approx 1/3 acre on Bexley/Greenwich border. Doctor's surgery next door, 5 mins to BR, 25 mins Central London, 5 mins high street and amenities. Comprises 4 double beds, 2 baths, 2 separate wcs, 22 ft 9 ins x 18ft 6 ins lounge, separate dining room. Double garage. £375k. Tel for photos/details: 020 8319 0817.

NORTH DEVON CONVERTED BARN. A completely accessible barn conversion known as 'Two Moors View' has wonderful views over N. Devon countryside. 4 bedrooms, one king size with ensuite wheel-in shower and wc. Large open plan kitchen and living area with all you will need for a comfortable break. Contact John Gillett on: 01179 698770.

10 MINUTES FROM DISNEYLAND. Florida villa owned by paraplegic. Sleeps up to 12, fully accessible and large. King size bed with ensuite bathroom, wc and wheel-in shower. Large pool with water operated seat for a disabled person. A holiday you can take with confidence. Contact John Gillett on: 01179 698770.

BUNGALOW FOR DISABLED person on quiet housing estate in pleasant village. 2/3 bedrooms, en suite shower room, track hoists for bed and toilet, ramps to doors. Conservatory, garage and carport. 4 miles university/seaside town of Aberystwyth with theatres, cinemas, restaurants, promenade and hospitals. £98,000. Tel for details and photographs: 01970 823097 (daytime).

3 STOREY HOUSE, fully converted for disabled use. There are suitable lifts between floors. Door opening intercom system fitted throughout. Large bedroom, served by a lift which is accessible from the living room. The upstairs also has a spare room and toilet. Downstairs accessible kitchen, wheel-in shower and low toilet. From the door, outside the kitchen, there is a patio with a view of The Brecon Beacons. Large, steep garden. Further along from the house, there is a pub and, nearby, there are general stores and a newsagents. Doctor's surgery about 10 minutes from the house. Railway line from Cardiff to Merthyr Tidfil, station only 20 miles away (station is accessible). £19,000 ono. Tel: 01443 699094.

BUNGALOW FOR SALE - SOUTHPORT Particularly spacious detached true bungalow, gas central heating, UPVC double glazing, 2/3 bedrooms (main bedroom extra large, large walk-in wardrobe), 2/3 entertainment rooms, current owner is a wheelchair user, front and rear ramps, kitchen and bathroom ideal for wheelchairs. Garage, lawned garden with borders front and rear, close to shops, convenient for the facilities of Churchtown Village - range of shops, doctors, botanic gardens. Nearby bus stops to Town Centre. Early inspection recommended. £134,950. Tel for more information: 01704 530800 (daytime), 01704 505634 (evening).

LUXURY FREEHOLD FIRST floor retirement apartment in Central Wilmslow, Cheshire. Wheelchair access and emergency pulls throughout. 2 fitted double beds each with en-suite baths (one is wheel-in shower room), study, lounge with dining area, Nef fitted kitchen. Very sheltered secure Bovis development for independent living with atrium gardens, parking, lifts, security gates, resident restaurant, lounge, guest suite, 24 hours services. Qualifying age: one partner 70 or over. £225,000 plus monthly service charge. Tel: 01925 730053 or 07785 578998.

• Household/family

AQUABILITY WALK-IN BATH, sit down, relax, as new, hardly used, complete with shower, curtains etc. Cost £3,000, will accept £1,500 ono. Tel: 020 8640 1915.

ARJO LISA HYDRAULIC operated lift. Excellent condition, very attractive/compact. Including universal sling and toilet sling. Takes 120 kgs weight. £950 ono. Tel: 01707 875992.

VELA KRUMME CHAIR height adjustable. Dark blue office style chair with high back for comfort. Electric adjustable height from around 30 to 70 cms. Lift capacity 60 kg, can be manually moved on its 4 small wheels. Safety brake to ensure movement restricted when necessary. Complete with charger and batteries. Armrests, footrest adjustable in height and width. Ideal to allow child or lightweight/young adult to be part of activities at floor level/desk/dinner table level or raise themselves higher for conversation or to assist standing. Cost, new £2,000, will accept £500 ono. Perfect condition. Tel Sarah: 07730 057125 (Manchester).

• Pets/Animals

TWO SHIRE MARES – black, white socks, partially sighted, gentle, always lived out. Suitable for being led, disabled riding. . Free to a good home. Tel: 01308 897781.

• Help

2 BON JOVI fans looking for a personal assistant. Bonnie, 21 years old, has Cerebral Palsy and due to this, uses an electric wheelchair, her speech is unclear and has co-ordination difficulties. Marianne has a disability, uses a wheelchair and is mostly independent, although needs a little help. We are huge Bon Jovi fans and go to every Bon Jovi event when possible. Bon Jovi are touring US next year, probably September, and we are wondering whether any females would like to do the tour whilst working as a PA for Bonnie and Marianne. Duties will involve enabling Bonnie to dress, wash, shower, brush teeth, hair, personal care, toileting and feeding. You must also enable Marianne and Bonnie to pack, unpack, transfer luggage including the chairs and general requirements such as carrying drinks to the table, preparing snacks/drinks. Marianne may need her wheelchair to be pushed sometimes. All costs except food will be paid for, the Personal Assistant will also receive a weekly wage for each week she is on tour with us (the amount will be given at interviews). Females who may be interested please telephone: 0116 2598334 or email: bojovigirl@aol.com

HOLIDAY HELP REQUIRED. Family, including two disabled lads, require a support worker to enjoy a week holiday within a fully adapted venue. Payment and expenses negotiable. For further details, tel: 01926 813145.

Classified linage advertisements

Please use this form if you are a private individual and want to place a classified advertisement (not Personal adverts). Write clearly in block capitals. Remember to allow a space between words. Use each space in the line even if you have to split words at the end.

Choose an advert style from far right. Send this coupon with your name, address, daytime telephone number and a cheque for the total made payable to *Disability Now* to: 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

DN reserves the right to edit advertisements if necessary. Completion of this form does not guarantee inclusion in a particular issue. **Sorry no refunds.** *DN* is a non-profit making newspaper.

Linage styles

EXAMPLE OF standard linage advert. Cost: £6 per line. Tick box below.

EXAMPLE OF semi-display linage advert. Cost: £6 per line plus £10. Tick box below.

EXAMPLE OF box linage advert. Cost: £6 per line plus £20. Tick box below.

- ◯ Standard linage advert
- ◯ Semi-display linage advert
- ◯ Box linage advert

• Personal

Handidate
Introduction Agency

Call now for free brochure

For disabled and able-bodied people

Established 1987

Tel: 01473 226950
Fax: 01473 254030
E-mail: handidate@btinternet.com
Website: www.handidate.com
Freepost, Handidate, The Wellington Centre, 52 Chevallier Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 2BR
A member of ABIA

Find-A-Friend

Alone? Why? You needn't be!
Any adult, any age, anywhere
Able-bodied or Disabled
Single, bereaved, divorced, separated, partnered or married – choose your own ideal relationship to share all life's activities or needs of which you feel you are deprived. *Your solution begins with:*

MUTUAL ESSENTIAL LINKS
1 Weir Street, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 5HL
Tel/Fax: Int' 00+44+ or UK (0)1606 49093

• Courses

Phab training

Would you like to gain skills, knowledge and awareness on Disability Equality issues? Phab offers a unique range of Disability Training Workshops based on 40 years working to remove social & physical barriers to integration.

For information on courses call Gill Goldsmith, Phab, Summit House, Wandle Road, Croydon, CRO 1DF Tel: 020 8667 9443 or mail: info@phabengland.org.uk
www.phabengland.org.uk

• Recruitment (on pages 35 to 37)

Disability Lincs Ltd
has a vacancy for an
Outreach Project Co-ordinator

Disability Lincs Ltd is a countywide organisation supporting disability information surgeries, provided by disabled people, for disabled people, and is a registered charity.

Salary: £17,000 circa
Hours: 35 per week

The post is funded for 3 years.

Own vehicle and clean driving licence essential.

The successful applicant will ideally have an understanding of:
- current disability issues and rights
- experience of staff and project management
- the ability to communicate with a wide range of people
- IT skills

We particularly welcome applications from disabled people.

Closing date for completed applications: **18 January 2002.**
Interviews have been planned for: **w/c 28 January 2002.**

For an application pack please send an A4 sae (value 33p) to Disability Lincs Ltd. Ancaster Day Centre, Boundary Street, Lincoln LN5 8NJ

Lottery Money Making a difference

COMMUNITY FUND

GAD Greenwich Association of Disabled People - CIL
'Independence • Rights for All'

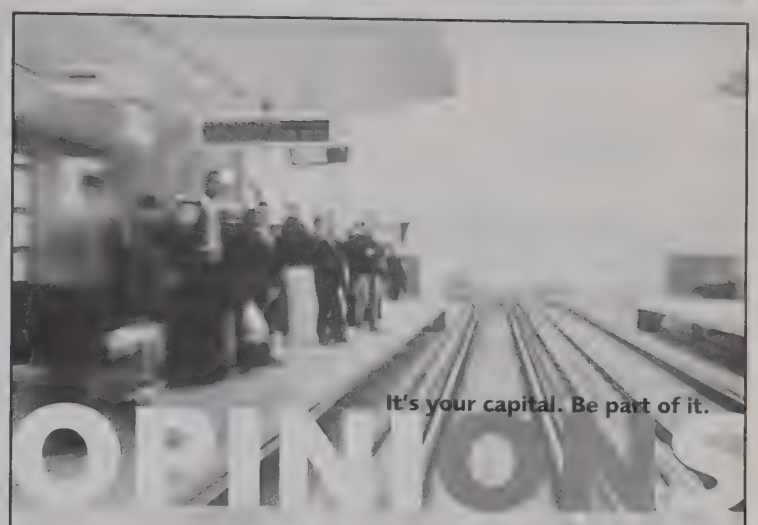
Independent Living Project Worker

(The post is for 14 hours per week, either 2 days a week, or 56 hours a month, we are prepared to be flexible about this post but must be daytime).

Scale 26 to 29 £19,230 to £21,177 (depending on experience) plus LW £1359 pro-rata for 14 hours per week

To provide disabled young people with one-to-one advice, information and advocacy around independent living, group training and advise on direct payments advice. You must be a disabled person, good knowledge of independent living issues and direct payments legislation, must have at least two years experience of working in this area with disabled young adults 16 to 25. For application pack please write, fax or email only to Director, GAD-CIL, The Forum @ Greenwich, Trafalgar Rd, London SE10 9EQ. FAX: **020-8293-3455**. E-mail: **director@gad.org.uk**
CLOSING DATE IS JANUARY 3RD 2002.
This project is funded by the Community Fund.

COMMUNITY FUND



Have yours heard on the London Transport Users Committee

Becoming an LTUC member means getting involved in all London's transport policies. It means representing your fellow passengers. And it means helping us to give transport users a better service. We are responsible for all transport networks in and around the Capital – whether you are travelling by car, taxi, rail, tube or bus, it's our job to ensure that you get a fair deal, and are listened to when you have something to say. All we ask is that you are a frequent user of transport in London, either public or private, with a good understanding of users' concerns – and a commitment to addressing them through effective teamwork.

We are particularly interested in receiving applications from disabled people and candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds who are currently under-represented on the committee.

To find out about becoming a member, call 020 7983 4143 today.

Closing dates: 21st December 2001 for requesting an application form; 2nd January 2002 for our receipt of your completed form.

LTUC it's the body to have a voice in.

www.london.gov.uk GREATER**LONDON**AUTHORITY
Taking pride in a diverse workforce.

COURSES

To advertise your vacancies or courses please contact Richard, tel: 020 7619 7336, or Patrick, tel: 020 7619 7320, or contact them both on fax: 020 7619 7331, minicom: 020 7619 7332. They can go on the web as well!

For personal ads, submit about 25 words and send a cheque or postal order for £10 payable to *Disability Now* with your ad. This is to help cover our costs.

To reply to a personal ad indicate the Box Number and mark the envelope Private and Confidential. If you do not it will be opened. Send it to *DN*, address on page 2.

SEND US YOUR SMALLS... ...and make a big impression. Small ads in DN reach over 70,000 people for just £6 a line. All small ads must be paid for in advance. If you want to advertise, please use the form provided. Send it with a cheque for the total to Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

• Services

PHYSIOTHERAPY
Birkdale Clinic: my practice has a relaxed and tranquil atmosphere. The aim of the treatment, which comes about as a result of co-operation between myself, as the therapist, and the patients, is to empower, encourage and motivate the person to regain their confidence and awareness of their body. Call Mrs Bondarenko,
Tel: 020 8998 9403

• Care in the Community

EXPERIENCED CARER – BEDS/BUCKS AREA with 10 years experience with spinal injuries. Reliable service. Reasonable rates. Contact Jill 01525 634 129 after 6pm or 07811 067634

• Help Wanted

Have you recently had a bad experience with a mobility aids supplier (e.g. stairlift, bathlift, wheelchair, scooter etc)? A consumer organisation is carrying out research into this area and would like to hear from you.

Were you pressured into buying a mobility product?

Have you been sold a product that you then found was unsuitable or faulty?

Has the after sales service been poor?

Please tell us about your experience by contacting us at: SRG attn. SR, Freepost, Hertford X, SG14 1YB or emailing us at *mobility.products@which.net*

• Councelling

West London (wheelchair accessible) Experienced counsellor/ psychotherapist Zing Rock
Mobile: **07939314008**
http://a2zcounselling.mainpage.net

• For Sales

Accessible Vehicle Register

We specialise in locating used vehicles to suit the specific needs of our customers. If you are looking for an accessible vehicle or have one to dispose of, contact Adam Price. We also supply and install all forms of access equipment.
01202 814112
adam.price@lineone.net

Powerchairs Mobility Consultants
New and Nearly New, Electric Wheelchairs, 3 and 4 Wheel Scooters.
All models wanted and for sale.
Ring Free anytime
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All major credit cards accepted

COTSWOLD COTS
Build Cots and Beds for Adults and Children with Special Needs
We Design And Build Any Cot or Bed You Need.
New Products: Extra Strong Playpens. Extra Large Stairgates. Fitted Padded Play Areas.
High Quality Fair prices
Information Phone 01993 842885

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES FOR SALE

1999 V Scudo by Universal Mobility, PAS, lowering suspension 8K miles	£13,500
1999 T VW 1.9 TD, by Universal, PAS, lowering suspension 8K miles	£11,995
1999 T Fiat Ulysees TD EL, Top spec. 5 seats & wheelchair 12.5K miles	£15,250
1998 R VW Cruiser 2.5 TD, Auto, 7K miles, Tail Lift	£12,750
1998 R VW Sharon 2.0, Auto 26K miles, 5 seats & wheelchair	£13,500
1998 R Mercedes Vito, Auto & remote entry etc 12k miles	£14,500
1995 M Fiesta Courier Chairman, Auto 31k miles	£5,995
1993 K Metro Chairman, Auto, 10K miles	£3,750
Nissan Vanette Cargo & Renault Trafic models	Choice of 10

A selection of 35 WAVs from £2,750 fully serviced with warranty. Demo and delivery anywhere in UK mainland free. Part exchange and vehicles sought for purchase.

CLARKE MOBILITY
SNODLAND, KENT
01634 243596
www.gfclarke.co.uk

PRE-OWNED & DEMONSTRATOR WAV'S FOR SALE

VW Caravelle 2.4D, '96 N, red. Lowering suspension, tip up forward facing rear seats, lowered rear access	£12,250
VW Transporter Caravelle 2.5TDi '97 P, Met Blue, 9 seats.	£12,500
Peugeot Expert 1.9TD, '99 S, silver, 5 seats & wheelchair.	£7,500
VW Transporter Caravelle 1.9TDi, '98 R, blue, 7 seats.	£11,500
Fiat Ulysse 2.0EL, '98 R, grey, full lowered floor wheelchair access & 4 seats	£11,000
VW Transporter SWB 1.9TD '95 M, green, WAV Conversion, 4 pass driver & wheelchair.	£9,750
Austin/Rover Montego 2.0Lxi estate, auto, '94 M, 55k miles, very clean, fitted with hand controls.	£1,750
Fiat Ulysse 2.0EL, R reg, 50K miles, lowered floor with ramp, driver, 3 pass & Wheelchair, PAS, twin sunroofs, climate control & electric windows.	£11,000

New or ex-demo Renault Kangoo and Citroen Berlingo Multispace WAVs – call for prices and spec'

All the above vehicles come with our Comprehensive Used Vehicle Warranty

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Gleneagles Conversions Ltd

DEADLINES

February 2002 classified deadlines: Booking: 11th January. Copy: 15th January

• Recruitment (on pages 35 to 37)

skills FOR BUSINESS Sector Skills Development Agency

PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS EXECUTIVE SEARCH & SELECTION

CAN YOU DEVELOP THE WORKFORCE FOR THE WORLD'S FOURTH LARGEST ECONOMY?

CHAIR & BOARD MEMBERS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTORS
HQ IN SOUTH YORKSHIRE

The UK benefits from strong economic performance. But there is no room for complacency. UK productivity lags behind other advanced economies - and our competitiveness in world markets is threatened by skill shortages in key areas.

That is why the four UK governments and employers from the private, public and voluntary sectors across the UK are coming together to close the skills gap - and build a worldclass workforce able to compete with the best.

A new Sector Skills Development Agency will take the lead, setting up Sector Skills Councils - created by business for business - to drive up skills across the UK economy. Focusing on the needs of their own business sectors, the new Councils will have challenging targets to reduce skills gaps and improve training standards.

The Sector Skills Development Agency will be responsible for setting targets for the Councils, controlling their funding and monitoring their performance. The Agency will be a private company limited by guarantee with an annual budget of around £30 million pa and about 40 staff. The UK Head Office of the Agency will be located in South Yorkshire.

Full details of all posts are available in an information pack.

Board Chair (ref: 4713)

The Chair will lead the Agency's drive to improve UK productivity. The post is offered on a three year term, with a time commitment of around two days a week expected in the first year. This may be less in subsequent years. Remuneration will be £400 per day (expected to total around £40k pa) plus expenses, but this role is far more significant for the opportunities it offers for the Chair to work at a UK-wide level as a key player in economic development.

Closing date for applications for Chair: 4th January 2002.

Board Members (Non Executive) (ref: 4714)

Up to 14 Board Members are sought from a wide range of backgrounds, reflecting the breadth of the skills agenda: from employers and businesses in any sector, from employer and employee bodies (including trade unions, professional bodies and trade associations); and from all parts of the UK. Members will be expected to commit 1-2 days a month to the Sector Skills Development Agency, preparing for and attending Board and other meetings. In the first year there may be a need for some additional days to work with emerging Sector Skills Councils. Remuneration will be £300 per day (expected to total around £7k pa) plus expenses.

Closing date for applications for Board Members: 1st February 2002.

Executive Team

Applications are also sought for a Chief Executive and top team to lead the process of building the new Agency, working with the Chair and Board Members to set its overall strategic direction. Full details of all posts are in the information pack.

Chief Executive (ref: 4707)
Salary to £75k plus benefits.

Finance & Resources Director (ref: 4709)
Salary to £60k plus benefits.

Policy & Research Director (ref: 4712)
Salary to £60k plus benefits.

Operations Director (ref: 4711)
Salary to £60k plus benefits.

Communications Director (ref: 4710)
Salary to £60k plus benefits.

Closing date for applications for Chief Executive and all Director posts: 11th January 2002.

For all posts, applications from men and women of all backgrounds are welcome. All appointments will be made on merit by fair and open processes, taking account of equal opportunities. Executive Team posts are open to secondments from the private, voluntary or public sectors for a three year term. Salaries and benefits as indicated. More may be available for exceptional candidates.

For detailed job descriptions and person specifications for these roles, please download the relevant SSDA information pack from our website www.pwcglobal.com/executive/uk which includes details of how to apply. Alternatively, call our 24-hour packline: for Chair and Board Member roles, call 020 7804 5252 or 020 7804 8998, leaving your name and address and quoting reference 4713/4; for Chief Executive and Director roles, call 020 7804 3309 or 020 7804 2500 leaving your name and address and quoting the relevant reference number.

Executive Search & Selection
PricewaterhouseCoopers
Benson House
33 Wellington Street
Leeds LS1 4JP.

RICHMOND ADVICE AND INFORMATION ON DISABILITY

Receptionist and Administrative Assistant
36 hours per week.
Job share considered
Salary: £16,209 including OLW

Richmond AID is an organisation of and for disabled people and we wish to appoint a Receptionist and Administrative Assistant to work at the Disability Action and Advice Centre in Teddington.

As the first point of contact you will provide an efficient and welcoming environment for all visitors to the DAAC. Excellent communication skills and sound IT skills are essential.

As part of a team committed to making the DAAC a Centre of excellence for all disabled people, you will find this position varied, interesting and challenging.

If you feel that you would like to be part of this dynamic charity apply for an application pack available in different formats on request, from Rob McRae-Adams, Richmond AID, Disability Action and Advice Centre, 4 Waldegrave Road, Teddington, TW11 8HT.

Telephone: **020 8831 6080** Minicom: **020 8831 6078**

Email: **r.mcrae-adams@richmond.gov.uk**

Closing date for applications **11 January 2002**
Interview date **22 January 2002**
Richmond AID is an equal opportunities employer and particularly welcomes disabled applicants.

Regd. Charity No.1074788. A Company Limited by Guarantee. Regd. in England No. 3612476. Affiliated to DIAL UK

Brent Association of Disabled People

Building an Umbrella Organisation

Development Officer

35 hr. per week. Salary £27983
per year and generous holidays entitlement.

BADP is one of London's oldest organisations of disabled people representing its membership at Borough level. The Development Officer will set up and manage a new initiative, which will contribute to refocusing BADP's role in the current socio-political climate.

The post offers great scope for someone interested in developing processes for consultation, partnership building and improving the inclusion of disabled people in mainstream activities.

The post-holder will need to be a good strategist, a good diplomat and a competent, result-oriented manager. An understanding of the socio-political currents that affect the voluntary and statutory sectors is essential. The post-holder will also need to be a good mediator with strong leadership and excellent communications skills.

The post is funded for 3 years through the Community Fund, Bridge House Estates Trust Fund and Lloyds TSB and is supported by an Administrative Assistant.

The deadline for returning of application is: 5.00pm Friday 25th January 2002. Interviews are scheduled for Wednesday 6th February 2002.
Application pack available from Kathleen Kennedy
Brent Association of Disabled People, 154 Harlesden Road, London NW10 3RX
Tel: **020 8451 3822** ext.**223** • Minicom:**020 8451 3822** ext.**222** • Fax: **020 8451 7803**
email: **badp@pop3.poptel.org.uk**

Applications are particularly welcome from people with disabilities.

Please state format required:- Large Print, Braille or disk.

WECIL

WEST OF ENGLAND CENTRE FOR INCLUSIVE LIVING

- 35 hours per week
- 6% contributory pension
- 30 days leave

For application pack please contact:

Wendy Tyler
WECIL Ltd.
Leinster Avenue
Knowle
Bristol BS4 1AR
Tel: 0117 903 8900
(Voice and minicom)

e-mail:
wendy.tyler@wecil-ltd.demon.co.uk

WECIL is establishing a innovative
Personal **A**ssistant **S**upport **S**cheme as a model of good practice.

PASS. seeks a Disabled person as

Personal Assistant Support Scheme Advisor (£19,770-£21,078)

We are looking for a committed and enthusiatic Disabled person to join our team, to provide advice and support to individual Disabled people in establishing and running their own personal assistance schemes.

Closing date: Friday 25th January 2002

Wecil particularly encourages applications from under-represented groups (eg. Black Disabled people, Disabled Lesbians and Gay Men).

DisabilityNOW

The campaigning newspaper
that puts you in the picture

Disability Now is also available on
Cassette, e-mail and disk.
Contact Talking Newspapers on 01435 862737

• Recruitment (on pages 34 to 37)

DFID Training Awards

The Associate Professional Officers Scheme is a DFID professional development programme to assist young professionals to improve their experience, expertise and potential to work in international development.

The scheme offers you a range of opportunities, depending on the sector, to gain practical work experience either in developing countries or in the UK and/or to pursue academic training to Masters degree level in the UK. Candidates who already have the relevant higher academic qualification may apply for the practical work experience only. In some disciplines, including Education, Engineering, Environment, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, Physical Planning and Governance, the emphasis will be on practical experience only. Awards are normally for 1-2 years.

In 2002 we will consider awards in the following sectors: Sustainable Rural Livelihoods and Renewable Natural Resources; including Agriculture – pre and post harvest, Agriculture Economics – including marketing and trade, and Environment/Natural Resource Economics, Rural Development or Development Studies with a Rural/RNR focus, Agricultural Engineering, Livestock and Wildlife, Statistics, Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture; Education, Environment, Enterprise Development, Engineering – including Communications, Transport, Physical Planning and Water and Environmental Health Engineering (including Sanitation Waste Management and Air Pollution) and Environmental Engineering in relation to urban and rural livelihood, Health and Population, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, Governance and Private Sector Policy – including Investment Climate, Competition Policy, Corporate Governance, Socially Responsible Business, Financial Sector Development and PPPs.

Qualifications

Candidates should be nationals of Member States of the European Economic Area (EEA), Commonwealth citizens who have an established right of abode and the right to work in the United Kingdom or those granted refugee status as defined by the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. Applicants should have, or expect to have, a good relevant first degree and relevant work experience, preferably in development overseas. In some disciplines, applicants with a minimum of two years' work experience in a developing country will be at an advantage in applying for awards.

Associate Professional Officers Scheme (APOS)

Terms Of Award

Academic Training: DFID pay tuition fees and a non taxable maintenance allowance of £8,720 p.a. (Inner London) and £6,970 p.a. (elsewhere).

Please note that the following salary rates are due an increase once DFID's pay negotiations have been concluded.

Practical Experience Overseas: DFID pay a taxable salary of £17,100 p.a. Additional benefits include a tax free cost of living allowance (if applicable), travel costs, medical expenses and accommodation costs.

Practical Experience in the UK: DFID pay a taxable salary of £20,600 p.a. for attachments in the UK.

Closing date for receipt of applications, with references, 31 January 2002.

Application forms can be obtained from the Department for International Development, Abercrombie House, Room AH375, Eaglesham Road, East Kilbride G75 8EA, by emailing Apos-Enq@dfid.gov.uk, by visiting www.dfid.gov.uk or telephone (answerphone) 01355 843428 for Governance, Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs, Environment Policy and all sub-disciplines under Sustainable Rural Livelihoods, 01355 843243 for Health and Population, 01355 843129 for Education, Private Sector Policy, Enterprise Development, Engineering and Physical Planning.

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DFID Department for International Development

www.dfid.gov.uk

Disability Now's comprehensive holiday coverage continues in the February 2002 issue

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Tel: 020 7619 7320
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Fax: 020 7619 7331

Action not words

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DIVERSITY AND TALENT

TO £95K

Ealing is a thriving, diverse community with a Council investing in excellence. We are not interested in second best and our new leadership structure is focusing on developing and delivering our vision, "Ealing 4 Excellence", which has cross party support and aims to differentiate Ealing as a leader in public service.

As a member of the Corporate Board reporting to the Chief Executive, Gillian Guy, your brief will be to support her, the Corporate Board and Councillors in setting the strategic direction for the Council and leading the change agenda. We have four key values which underpin our E4e programme:

- Can do, will do
- Leadership at all levels
- One Council
- Respect for customers and colleagues

To help us achieve our ambitions, we have created this exciting new role, responsible for mainstreaming and enhancing the profile of equality and diversity across both employment and service provision to move this agenda forward. You will act as senior advisor to the organisation on all Human Resources issues ensuring that our processes and learning and development strategy are linked closely with our business aims.

We have already begun to grasp the nettle. We have completed an Equalities audit across the Council and are working with our staff to make Ealing a better place for everyone. But there is still scepticism - about our determination to deliver, about whether our behaviours match the rhetoric, about whether the cultural change is real.

You will of course ensure that we are bias-free and legally compliant. But, more fundamentally, your leadership will support the achievement of our corporate goals by fostering a diverse workforce and effective community partnerships. You will build a better understanding of the business case for diversity, establish a positive performance culture that encourages learning, growth, innovation and cross-boundary working in pursuit of corporate priorities.

Your background, be it private or public sector, is not the issue. But you'll have experience of leading change in a complex and diverse environment and be well versed in Human Resources practice.

Your track record will include attracting, retaining and developing talent. Full of innovative ideas, you'll have the energy and drive to develop them into high quality solutions. Already operating at a senior level you will have ambitions to become a Chief Executive.

Join us and share our ambition to make this Borough the major player in the region and a place of choice to live and work. In return, we'll provide a full range of benefits that will reflect your skills, experience and influence. Download a briefing pack from our consultants' website or obtain a hard copy by calling their 24 hour line 020 7212 6532 quoting reference 4644. For an informal and confidential discussion, call our advisors, Beverley Steel on 020 7804 4459 or Nancy Haque on 020 7804 1858. The closing date is 21st December 2001.

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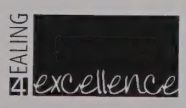
London Borough of Ealing is an Equal Opportunities employer who welcomes applications from all sectors of the community in an effort to reflect the diversity of the community it serves.



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Independent Activities Project

Wishes to appoint a

FULL-TIME TRANSITIONAL WORKER

The aim of the organisation is to enable disabled people to access local community facilities.

We want to appoint a Transitional Worker who will work with young people who have a physical and or sensory disability, between the ages of 16-25, going through this challenging period and to support them in planning for their future.

To carry out this job effectively the person appointed will be in contact with a wide range of people. This will include children, parents, social workers, health professionals and other voluntary and statutory organisations. It is therefore essential that the person is a good communicator and enjoys being in regular contact with people.

A general understanding of disability issues is essential.

Salary:	**SO1 £21,177 inclusive of OLW**
Closing Date:	**10.00am 16th January 2002**
Interview Date:	**24th January 2002**

Please write to the Independent Activities Project, VAC, 12, School Road, Hounslow, Middlesex, TW3 1QZ, for further details and an Application Form.

The Independent Activities Project is working towards becoming an equal opportunities employer.

We positively encourage applications from disabled people.
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• What's on

The Royal College of Psychiatrists' Research Unit will hold a Clinical Audit in Learning Disability Services Forum, 23 January, 10am-4.30pm. The forum aims to facilitate the sharing of information and ideas relating to clinical audit projects undertaken in services for people with a learning disability. Anyone who has undertaken any clinical audit projects is invited to submit ideas for a 15-20 minute presentation or supply a poster display. Contact Ginny Smith or Anne-Marie Draycott, Tel: 020 7227 0842/0829, e-mail: ginny1.smith @virgin.net or am.draycott@virgin.net

The Community Fund will hold Ageing and Social Inclusion, 20 February, Kensington Town Hall, London. The conference aims to bring together researchers, voluntary organisations, professionals and older people to discuss activities and opportunities for future research into aspects of ageing. It will also look at work already done by the Community Fund and provide information on their research grants programme. Tel: 020 7747 5299, e-mail: *enquiries@community-fund.org.uk*

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DN cannot guarantee inclusion in a particular issue. Due to deadlines, please send details at the earliest opportunity.

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Candid Dan

Dan awaits a surprise Christmas and shares some psychic wisdom

Although the January issue is in your palms right now, I am not even considering what awaits me in that horrid month. Instead I'm awaiting the Christmas break, furiously willing the intervening weeks away.

Although the allure of Christmas has lessened over recent years, for an inexplicable yet highly welcome reason it has reared its happy head this year. I'm wearing a great big smile, thinking of an extended period of happiness that can only be dented by Julie Andrews singing *that* song on *that* hill for the umpteenth time.

The reason for looking forward to the hols so much is that I don't know what to expect from it, besides cheering on Manchester United with dad at some point, hoping recent defensive calamities end.

To this end, Windsor thinks I should send our goalie, Barthez, a badly made toupee as a festive gift. This, I was told, is not to improve his performance but to provide a distraction from his abysmal showings. A curt response was offered.

"Mystic Winz, astrologer to the rich and gullible" has also offered some new year predictions, ranging from the possibility of my growing elaborate facial hair for scientific research to my breaking the world record for the most double entendres in 24 hours. I do hope he recovers quickly.

Crossword Answers

ACROSS: **1.** Foot And Mouth Disease **8.** Ted **10.** Straw **11.** Edwards **13.** Cardiff **15.** Anne **16.** Heath **17.** Spy **18.** Robinson **20.** Danny **21.** USA **23.** Thaw **26.** New York **27.** American Pie **28.** Aki **29.** Pure **31.** Vice **32.** Francis **34.** St **35.** Taylor **37.** Ali **38.** Owen **40.** Second **44.** Andrews **45.** Real **46.** Vulture

DOWN: **1.** Foster **2.** Traffic **3.** Madonna **4.** Turin **5.** Smith **6.** Ancram **7.** Earth **8.** Twins **9.** Duffy **12.** Sweeney **14.** Posh Spice **19.** Oldham **20.** Dennis Tito **22.** Cruise **24.** Warne **25.** Duncan **28.** Alistair **29.** Prescott **30.** Ross **33.** Rates **36.** Radio **39.** Nepal **41.** Cameo **42.** Edward **43.** Venus

GET YOUR SKATES ON!

Disney On Ice

In 2001, one of the most popular ways to enjoy the magic and music of Disney was to see some of its best-loved characters take to the ice. If you missed out don't fret, for here's a chance to win tickets to see another Walt classic come to life on the ice in 2002. From September, Disney brings you one of it's most eagerly awaited productions to the UK – Beauty and the Beast on Ice. This timeless romance will transport you to a storybook village, where the innocent beauty, Belle, meets the noble beast in all his terrifying splendour.

There are four pairs of tickets (worth £12.50 each) up for grabs for shows in each of the cities listed below.

NB *All venues are wheelchair accessible.*

For more information, call the numbers below or visit the website: *www.disneyonice.com*

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Nottingham: 0115 8533069
Manchester: 0161 9308000
Newcastle: 0980 7078000
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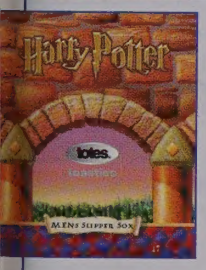

Judging by the heaps of entries we've received in response to December's Harry Potter give-away, it is clear that many of you would welcome the chance to get your hands (and feet!) on some more goodies. To mark the end of this Potter potty year, we've got 30 pairs of slippersocks (worth £8 each) and 10 umbrellas (worth £14 each) courtesy of totes ISOTONER. Both products are available in adult and children's sizes and feature a colourful array of designs and imagery from the hit film. If you want to keep warm and dry Harry style this side of Christmas, contact totes ISOTONER Customer Services dept on 01277 630277 or email *customer.service@totesuk.com*

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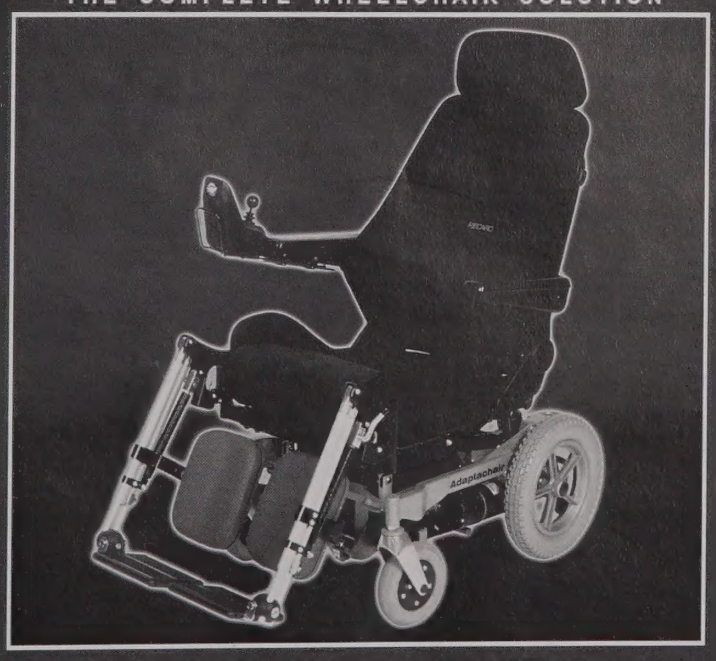

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- ○ Beauty and the Beast on Ice
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DN next month

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